Saskatchewan
Alcohol and
Drug Abuse
Commission

Developing assertive behavior

How to be your own person

Resource material from **SADAC**

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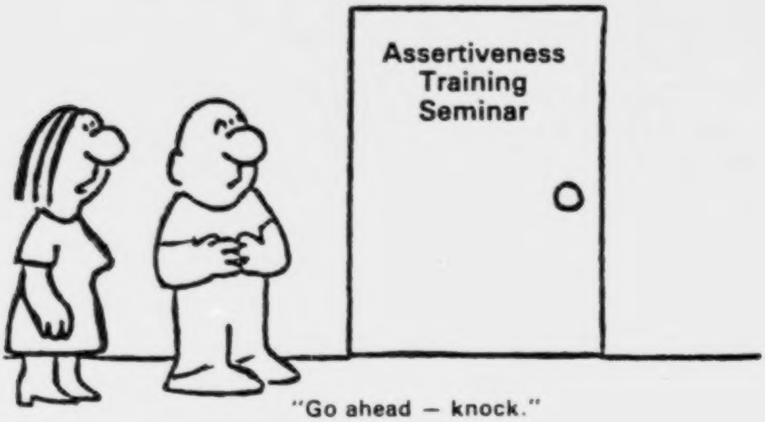
"How to be your own person"



"Go ahead — knock."

> "There is so much more to be gained from life by being free and able to stand up for oneself, and from honoring the same right for others."
> Robert E. Alberti and Michael L. Emmons
> Your Perfect Right

Compiled by Renu Kapoor MSSW

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank several people who helped me compile this manual. Six years ago, I took Assertion Training for Trainers from Pat Lorje and Zender Katz (Mental Health Clinic, Saskatoon). Pat especially gave me a lot of courage. Since then I have been collecting material from every source possible. This manual is the outcome of all my collections and readings over the years.

I also want to acknowledge my gratitude to clients and many families who gave me the opportunity over the years to design and interpret my feelings and keep this manual up-to-date.

Very special thanks to the Saskatchewan Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (SADAC) and the staff of the Regina Alcoholism Rehabilitation Centre who made it possible to work on this project; to the Affirmative Action Branch of the Public Service Commission for arranging this work assignment under The Management Training Program; and to STEPP Program organizers and staff at SaskTel for assisting me in the development of this manual.

All of you have helped to make this manual possible. My sincere appreciation.

Renu Kapoor

PREFACE

This manual has been designed to teach people how to express a variety of personal opinions--feelings and attitudes in a more effective and socially appropriate manner.

Learning assertion, has a long history. As early as 1949, Andrew Salter in Conditional Reflex Therapy described an early form of assertion training. However, only since 1970 have many professionals become greatly interested in assertion training and started to refine and expand its procedures. The growing interest in assertion training in the part of both professionals and the lay public is not a fad. Instead, this interest is a natural outgrowth of cultured changes which occurred in the sixties. Consequently, a lot of the articles in the beginning were written especially for women. Some of these articles are included in this manual. Even though these articles were primarily written for women, I feel men as well can learn a lot of new skills for themselves through reading and experimenting.

In using this manual, I believe it is important that you read each module very thoroughly. This is a work manual and it should be used with a training group. It is also my hope that this manual will help trainers to conduct effective assertion training. Moreover, I encourage assertion trainers to attend experimental workshops.

Learning to behave assertively does not occur overnight. It takes time and hard work. It requires systematic practice. As in learning any skill, you will improve if you are motivated and willing to try out new behaviors. The important thing is to determine the areas in which you would like to improve your behavior and then to proceed systematically.

Good luck and go ahead with your training. It is exciting.

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ASSERTIVENESS

- Open, honest communication.
- Learning how to relax and reduce anxiety.
- Getting more of your needs met.
- Learning social skills that form closer interpersonal relationships.
- Being able to verbally and non-verbally communicate your positive and negative feelings, thoughts, and emotions without experiencing undue amounts of anxiety or guilt and without violating the dignity of others.
- Taking responsibility for what happens to you in life.
- Making more decisions and free choices.
- Being a friend to yourself and maintaining your own dignity and self-respect.
- Recognizing that you have certain rights and value system that need not be sacrificed.
- Being able to protect yourself from being victimized and taken advantage of by others.
- Discriminating as to when assertive behaviors may lead to negative as well as positive consequences.
- Essentially this is what we believe assertion training is all about. It is not aggression training whereby you transgress upon the rights and dignity of another person. It is not a means of manipulating or deceiving others in order to just get ahead. On the contrary, assertion training, as we see it, rests upon a foundation of respect for yourself, respect for others, and respect for your own value system from others.

Taken from Cotler and Guerra - Assertion Training

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ASSERTIVE

The central idea of assertiveness is that you assume responsibility for yourself. You become the final judge of your behavior, emotions and decisions. If you are not the final judge, it's easy for people to direct you with their own rules, guidelines, standards of right and wrong, notions of fairness, reason, and other appeals to external structure.

The consequences of being nonassertive are obvious. You get stuck with the unpleasant jobs, you don't get paid what you deserve, strangers cut in front of you in lines, you always do what others want rather than what you want, you end up owning things you don't want or need because you can't say "no" to friends or salespeople who persuade you to buy something.

Once you learn to stand up for yourself, to be assertive when it's appropriate and right, you take over the control of your life and become a much more satisfied person as a result. That is not to say you always get your own way - you won't. Moreover, always being right or getting your way is not the ultimate purpose of being assertive. What is really important is knowing what you want and making your feelings known. Even if others don't go along with you, you're at least taking an active role in determining what's going on in your life.

S.U.D.S. Level

Subjective

Units

Discomfort

Scale

Criteria for Evaluating Assertive Behavior

1. Determine the anxiety experienced by the trainee in the situation:
   Suds score
   Eye contact
   Relaxed posture
   Nervous laughter or joking
   Excessive or unrelated head, hand, and body movements

2. Evaluate the verbal content:
   Did the trainee say what he/she really wanted to say?
   Comments concise and to the point?
   Comments definitive, specific, and firm?
   No long-winded explanations, excuses, or apologetic behavior
   "I" statements and "feeling talk"

3. Evaluate how the message was delivered:
   Almost immediately after the other person spoke
   No hesitancy or stammering
   Appropriate loudness, tone, and inflection
   No whining, pleading, or sarcasm

4. Decide whether the trainee was pleased with his/her behavior

* The Suds score refers to the Subjective Unit of Disturbance Scale score developed by Wolpe (1969). Trainees are instructed to rate the level of anxiety that they felt in situations calling for assertive behavior on a subjective scale which ranges from 0, completely relaxed, to 100, extremely anxious.

1. Determine your anxiety in the situation

There are five criteria in determining the degree of discomfort you experience while asserting yourself: the Subjective Unit of Disturbance Scale (Suds score), *eye contact, posture, nervous laughter or joking, and excessive or unrelated head, hand, and body movements.

Suds Score

The Suds score is used to communicate your subjectively experienced level of anxiety. After responding to each situation, rate yourself using the Suds score. In using the scale, you will rate your level of anxiety from 0, completely relaxed, to 100, very nervous and uptight. In the next three paragraphs, you will learn how to use the Suds score to rate your anxiety.

Imagine when you are completely relaxed and calm. For some people, this occurs while resting or reading a good book. For others, it occurs while lying on the beach or floating in the water. Give your feelings in the situation in which you are most relaxed a rating of "0" Suds.

Next, imagine the situation in which your anxiety is highest. Imagine the feeling of being extremely nervous and uptight. Perhaps in this situation your hands are clammy and cold. You may feel shaky and dizzy, or you may feel quite constricted. For some people, feeling most nervous occurs when someone close has been in an accident; when extreme pressure to achieve is exerted on them (exams, yearly reports, and so on); or when they speak in front of a group. Give the feeling you experience in this situation a rating of "100" Suds.

You have now identified the two end points of the Suds scale: 0 and 100 Suds. Imagine the entire scale (like a ruler) going from 0 Suds, completely relaxed, to 100 Suds, very nervous.

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 100
completely relaxed — very nervous

You now have the entire range of the scale to rate your level of anxiety. To practice using this scale, write your Suds score, at this moment, on the line below.

Self-Assessment Questions

Participants are encouraged to phrase a series of assessment questions in a manner comfortable for them. The following are examples of questions in a recommended sequence.

What is my SUDS level?
What am I doing (verbally and nonverbally)?
What am I feeling?
What am I thinking?
What do I want to be thinking, feeling, and doing?
What thoughts, opinions, needs, feelings do I want to express in this situation?
What do I want the other person to know?
What thoughts are keeping me from doing what I want?
What do I think is appropriate to express?
How can I go ahead and express what I want?

Clearly, some interactions do not allow for such lengthy analysis. However, all of these questions need not be asked and answered in every situation. Their purpose is to identify whatever is blocking the desired responses and to facilitate clear thinking although anxiety is present. Participants report that they can think through the sequence in a few seconds, particularly if it is a recurring situation to which they have given some prior thought.

This self-questioning procedure is emphasized so that participants can learn to assess their thinking, feeling, and behaviors in specific situations. We teach participants to ask themselves these questions because they are more likely to learn and use the procedure than if trainers merely asked those questions of the participants and hoped they would model the behavior.

A case example / The following is a demonstration of how the trainers might introduce this questioning process. (Note: Assume that the situation has been specified; any irrational thinking challenged; the personal rights clarified; and SUDS level explained.)

A participant, who is an apartment manager, wants to ask her employer for a greater reduction in her rent. In fact, she had already approached her employer once, and came away feeling she did not handle the situation as well as she would have liked.

Tr: What was your SUDS level as you were about to meet with your employer?
P: About 85!...really high.

DISCRIMINATION TEST ON ASSERTIVE, AGGRESSIVE, AND NONASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR.

The following self-check Discrimination Test (Jakubowski, 1975) consists of 60 interpersonal situations. The response to these situations are aggressive, assertive, or nonassertive. Twenty judges rated each of these responses, reaching 90 percent to 100 percent agreement on classifying each situation. Trainers should carefully reach each situation and classify each response, as either assertive (+), aggressive (-) or nonassertive (N). The correct answers appear on page 12. A sum of 90 percent correct would indicate a satisfactory understanding of these concepts. We highly recommend that those trainers who obtain less than 90 percent re-read this chapter and analyze each of their errors to ascertain where their misunderstanding occurred, for example, misconstruing escalated assertions as aggression, etc.

Situation - S Response - R

1. S. Husband gets silent, instead of saying what's on his mind. You say,
   R. I guess you are uncomfortable talking about what's bothering you. I think we can work it out if you tell me what's irritating you. ____

2. S. A friend has asked you for the second time in a week to babysit for her child while she runs errands. You have no children of your own and respond,
   R. You're taking advantage of me and I won't stand for it! It's your responsibility to look after your own child. ____

3. S. An attendant at a gas station you frequently stop at for gas neglected to replace your gas cap. You notice this and return to inquire about it and you say,
   R. One of you guys here forgot to put my gas cap on! I want it found now or you'll buy me a new one. ____

4. S. You'd like a raise and say,
   R. Do you think that, uh, you could see your way clear to give me a raise? ____

5. S. Someone asks you for a ride home and it is inconvenient because you're late, have a few errands, and the drive will take you out of your way. You say,
   R. I am pressed for time today and can take you to a convenient bus stop, but I won't be able to take you home. ____

6. S. Student enjoyed the teacher's class and says,
R. You make the material interesting. I like the way you teach the class. _____

7. S. Your husband promised you that he would talk to your daughter about her behavior at school. The promise has not been carried out. You say,
R. I thought we agreed last Tuesday that you would have a talk with Barb about her behavior at school. So far there's been no action on your part. I still think you should talk to her soon. I'd prefer sometime tonight. _____

8. S. A committee meeting is being established. The time is convenient for other people but not for you. The times are set when it will be next to impossible for you to attend regularly. WHen asked about the time, you say,
R. Well I guess it's OK. I'm not going to be able to attend very much but it fits everyone else's schedule. _____

9. S. In a conversation, a man suddenly says, "What do you women libbers want anyway?" The woman responds,
R. Fairness and equality. _____

10. S. You've been talking for a while with a friend on the telephone. You would like to end the conversetion and you say,
R. I'm terribly sorry but my supper's burning, and I have to get off the phone. I hope you don't mind. _____

11. S. A married man persists in asking you out for a date saying, "Come on honey, what harm can it do to go to lunch with me just this once?" You respond,
R. I like our relationship the way it is. I wouldn't feel comfortable with any kind of dating relationship and that includes lunch. _____

12. S. At a meeting one person often interrupts you when you're speaking. You say,
Excuse me. I would like to finish my statement. _____

13. S. You are in a hard-sell camera store, and you have been pressured to purchase an item. You say,
R. Well, OK, I guess that's pretty much what I was looking for. Yes, I suppose I'll get it.

14. S. A blind person approaches and asks you to purchase some materials. You respond,
R. You people think that just because you're blind, people have to buy stuff from you. Well, I'm certainly not going to. _____

15. S. Teenager is asked to do laundry. As the child puts laundry in the washer, parent says,
R. Don't forget to balance the load. Make sure you push the right buttons. You just never do things right. _____

16. S. You have been pestered several times this week by a caller who has repeatedly tried to sell you magazines. The caller contacts you again with the same magazine proposition. You say,
    R. This is the third time I've been disturbed and each time I've told you that I'm not interested in subscribing to any magazine. If you call again, I'll simply have to report this to the Better Business Bureau.

17. S. Kids upstairs are making a lot of noise. You bang on the ceiling and yell.
    R. Hey you! Knock off the noise! _____

18. S. An acquaintance has asked to borrow your car for the evening. You say,
    R. I don't know   Well, it's not worth getting into a fuss about it. You can borrow it, but I should warn you that I've been having trouble with the brakes. _____

19. S. Wife tells husband she'd like to return to school. He doesn't want her to do this and says,
    R. Why would you want to do that? You know you're not capable enough to handle the extra work load. _____

20. S. An employee makes a lot of mistakes in his work. You say,
    R. You're a lazy and sloppy worker. _____

21. S. Husband expects dinner on table when he arrives home from work and gets angry when it is not there immediately. You say,
    R. I know you are tired and hungry and would like to have dinner immediately, but I have been doing some sculping which is important to me. I will have dinner ready soon. _____

22. S. You've taken a suit to the cleaners that you plan to wear for a coming special occasion. When you go to pick it up, you find that there's a hole in it. You say,
    R. I planned to wear that tonight. Aren't you people responsible enough to do something about it. _____

23. S. You are having trouble writing a paper and don't know exactly what further information you need. You say,
    R. I really must be dumb but I don't know where to begin on this paper. _____

24. S. Roommate about to leave for work tells you that a friend of his needs a ride that afternoon and he has volunteered your services. You say,
    R. You've got your nerve committing me without asking first! There's no way I'm going to the airport today. Let him take a cab like everybody else does. _____

25. S. A friend promised to come to a special party and then failed to show up. You call and after a few minutes of social conversation, you say,
R. I understood that you were coming to my party but you didn't come. I feel bad about not having you there. What happened to you? ____

26. S. A good friend calls and tells you she desperately needs you to canvass the street for a charity. You don't want to do it and say,
R. Oh gee, Fran, I just know that Jerry will be mad at me if I say "yes." He says I'm always getting involved in too many things. You know how Jerry is about things like this. ____

27. S. You are at a meeting of seven men and one women. At the beginning of the meeting the chairman asks you to be the secretary. You respond,
R. No, I'm sick and tired of being the secretary just because I'm the only woman in the group. ____

28. S. You are team teaching but you're doing all the planning teaching, interacting and evaluating students. You say,
R. We're supposed to be team teaching and yet I see that I am doing all the work. I'd like to talk about changing this. ____

29. S. The bus is crowded with high school students who are talking to their friends. You want to get off but no one pays attention when you say "Out please." Finally, you say,
R. What is the matter with you kids? I'm supposed to get off at the next corner! ____

30. S. Student comes late to class for the third time. Teacher responds,
R. When you're not here at the beginning of my lecture, I have to repeat parts of my lecture and that takes extra class time. I'm getting bothered by your tardiness. ____

31. S. Man asks you for a date. You've dated him once before and you're not interested in dating him again. You respond,
R. Oh, I'm really so busy this week that I don't think I will have time to see you this Saturday night. ____

32. S. The local library calls and asks you to return a book which you never checked out. You respond,
R. What are you talking about? You people better get your records straight -- I never had that book and don't you try to make me pay for it. ____

33. S. You are in a line at the store. Someone behind you has one item, and asks to get in front of you. You say,
R. I realize that you don't want to wait in line, but I was here first and I really would like to get out of here. ____

34. S. Parent is talking with a married child on the telephone and would like the child to come for a visit. When the child politely refuses, the parent says,
R. You're never available when I need you. All you ever think about is yourself. ____

35. S. Employer sends a memorandum stating that there should be no more toll business calls made without first getting prior permission. One employee responds.
R. You're taking away my professional judgment. It's insulting to me. ____

36. S. Your husband expects dinner on the table when he arrives home from work and gets angry when it is not there immediately. You respond,
R. I feel awful about dinner. I know you're tired and hungry ...it's all my fault. I'm just a terrible wife. ____

37. S. Plans to vacation together are abruptly changed by friend and reported to you on the phone. You respond,
R. Wow, this has really taken me by surprise. I'd like to call you back after I've had some time to digest what's happened.

38. S. Parent is reprimanding the children when they haven't cleaned up their room and says,
R. You've got to be the worst kids in the whole city! If I had known parenthood was going to be like this, I would never have had any kids at all!

39. S. Your roommate habitually leaves the room a mess. You say,
R. You're a mess and our room is a mess.

40. S. Your husband wants to watch a football game on TV. There is something else that you'd like to watch. You say,
R. Well, ah, honey, go ahead and watch the game, I guess I could do some ironing. ____

41. S. Parent is annoyed that school counselor has not done anything about son's conflict with a teacher. Parent says,
R. I have asked the school to investigate the situation in son's classroom and it concerns me that nothing has been done. I must insist that this situation be looked into. ____

42. S. Supervisor has just berated you for your work. You respond,
R. I think some of your criticisms are true, but I would have liked your being less personal about telling me about my shortcomings. ____

43. S. You ten-year-old child has interrupted you three times with something that is not urgent. You've assertively asked her not to interrupt you. The child has now again interrupted you. You say,
R. I can't listen to you and talk on the phone at the same time. I'll be on the phone a few more minutes and then we'll talk. ____

44. S. It is your turn to clean the apartment, which you have neglected to do several times in the last month. In a very calm tone of voice your roommate asked you to clean up the apartment. You say,
R. Would you get off my back! ____

45. S. You're the only woman in a group of men and you're asked to be the secretary of the meetings. You respond, ____
R. I'm willing to do my share and take the notes this time. In future meetings, I'd like us to share the load. ____

46. S. A fellow teacher always tries to get out of doing his turn of team teaching and asks you again to take his turn. You say,
R. We....I guess that'd be OK even if I do have a splitting headache. ____

47. S. An acquaintance has asked to borrow your car for the evening. You say,
R. Are you crazy! I don't lend my car to anyone. ____

48. S. Loud stero upstairs is disturbing you. You telephone and say,
R. Hello, I live downstairs. Your stereo is loud and is bothering me. Would you please turn it down. ____

49. S. You have set aside 4:00 to 5:00 for things you want or need to do. Someone asks to see you at that time. You say,
R. Well, uh I can see you at that time. It's 4:00 Monday then. Are you sure that's a good time for you? ____

50. S. Wife gets silent instead of saying what's on her mind. You say,
R. Here it comes. The big silent treatment. Would it kill you to spit it out just once? ____

51. S. Husband has criticized your appearance in front of your friends. You say,
R. I really feel hurt when you criticize my appearance in front of other people. If you have something to say, please bring it up at home before we leave. ____

52. S. A friend often borrows small amounts of money and does not return it unless asked. She again asks for a small loan which you'd rather not give her. You say,
R. I only have enough money to pay for my own lunch today. ____

53. S. A neighbor has been constantly borrowing your vacuum sweeper. The last time, she broke it. When she asked for it again, you reply,
R. I'm sorry, but I don't want to loan my sweeper anymore. The last time I loaned it to you it was returned broken. ____

54. S. A woman is being interviewed for a job, in the process of which the interviewer looks at her leeringly and says, "You certainly look like you have all the qualifications for the job." She responds,
R. I'm sure I am quite capable of doing the work here. ____

55. S. Your mate wants to go out for a late night snack. You're too tired to go out and say,
R. I really don't feel like going out tonight. I'm too tired. But I'll go with you and watch you eat. ____

56. S. You're walking to the copy machine when a fellow employee, who always asks you to do his copying, asks you where you are going. You respond,
R. I'm going to the Celtics ball game ... Where does it look like I'm going? ____

57.S. Parent is talking with a married child on the telephone and would like child to come for a visit. The parent says,
I had a funny dream last night. I dreamt that the grandchildren came to visit me. ____

58. S. Your best friend has recently divorced. She confides that she is currently sleeping with several men and is not happy with this situation. She says that she's not sure how to handle it. You respond,
R. Well, I guess it's true about what they say about divorcees being an easy mark. ____

59. S. Each night your roommate consistently slams the bathroom and bedroom doors, either keeping you awake or even if you're not sleeping, annoying you. You say,
R. Please don't slam the doors--it's annoying to hear that late in the night. It wakes me up and I can't get back to sleep. ____

60. S. You are asked to serve on a committee. You respond,
R. I'm sorry. I'm not available to serve on that committee. ____

KEY FOR DISCRIMINATION TEST:

1. +
2. -
3. -
4. N
5. +
6. +
7. +
8. N
9. +
10. N
11. +
12. +
13. N
14. -
15. -
16. +
17. -
18. N
19. -
20. -
21. +
22. -
23. N
24. -
25. +
26. N
27. -
28. +
29. -
30. +
31. N
32. -
33. +
34. -
35. -
36. N
37. +
38. -
39. -
40. N
41. +
42. +
43. +
44. -
45. +
46. N
47. -
48. +
49. N
50. -
51. +
52. N
53. +
54. +
55. N
56. -
57. N
58. -
59. +
60. +

WHAT IS ASSERTIVE TRAINING?

Assertive Training is based on the theory that our social behavior is learned and that therefore it can be unlearned and replaced by new, more rewarding behavior. Once we have tried out some new ways of acting and received positive results, we are likely to continue behaving in these new rewarding ways.

Assertive Training teaches us to begin to flex our own assertive muscles, gradually at first, until, before long, we are beginning to express our feelings and needs in straightforward ways.

A Final Comment

In this course of training, clients usually do a fair amount of "assertion for the sake of assertion." By the end of training, hopefully you have a natural assertiveness which you can choose to exercise if you wish. When people know that you have the necessary skills to assert yourself, you frequently feel less of a need to do so. When you decide not to assert yourself it's because you choose to and not because you're afraid to.

SUGGESTED BOOKS ON ASSERTIVENESS

* Alberti, R.E. and Emmons, M.D. Your Perfect Right: A Guide to Assertive Behavior. San Louis Obisop: Impact, 1970, 1974 (118 pages, $6.50 in paperback, good introduction.)**

Alberti, R.E. and Emmons, M.L. Stand Up, Speak Out, Talk Back. Markham, Ontario: Pocketbook, 1975 (206 pages, $1.75, good introduction, available locally.)

* Bloom, L. Coburn, K.L. and Pearlman J.C. The New Assertive Woman. New York, New York: Dell, 1976 (221 pages, $2.25, available locally highly recommended.)

* Bower, Sharon and Bower, Gordon Asserting Yourself - A Practical Guide for Positive Change. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Reading, Massachusetts, 1976 ($5.00, available locally).

* Butler, Pamela Self Assertion for Women - A Guide to Becoming Androgynous. San Francisco: Canfield Press ($5.00).

Fensterheim, H. and Baer, J. Don't Say Yes When You Want To Say No. New York: Dell, 1975 (304 pages, $1.95, available locally).

Lazarus, A. and Fay, A I Can If I Want To. New York, New York: William Morrow and Co., 1975 (118 pages, $7.95 in hard cover, available locally.)

* Phelps, S. and Austin, N. The Assertive Woman. San Louis Obisop: Impact, 1975 (177 pages, $3.85.)**

* Smith, M.J. When I Say No, I Feel Guilty. New York: Bantam, 1975 (324 pages, $1.95, available locally.)

Taubman, B. How to Become an Assertive Woman. Markham, Ontario: Pocketbook, 1975 (214 pages, $1.95, available locally.)

*** These books may be obtained by writing directly:
Impact, Box 1094, San Louis Obisop, California,
93406. Add 25¢ for postage.

* Lange, A. & Jakubowski, P. Responsible Assertive Behavior - Cognitive/Behavioral Procedures for Trainers. Champaign, Illinois: Research Press, 1976 (348 pages, $8.95.)

* Jakubowski, P. & Lange, A. The Assertive Option - Your Rights and Responsibilities. Champaign, Illinois: Research Press, 1978 ($7.95).

These books available through: Research Press, c/o Colwell Systems Ltd., 16309 Provencher Boulevard, Brossard, Quebec J4W 1Z2 (514) 465-5550.

* highly recommended

MODULE # 1 HOMEWORK

1. Practise at least two Assertive responses daily. (any situation, family, work, social)

2. Check you Suds Level each time.

3. Keep a record of Assertive responses you made, along with Suds Level and note any particular problem you had asserting.

4. Give three compliments each day for a week. Assess how comfortable and how direct you are, how fully you receive them, and how assertively you respond.

5. When you receive compliments, notice how comfortable you are, how fully you receive them and how assertively you respond.

6. If you recognize a specific behavior while giving or receiving compliments which you would like to change, practice changing it and look for gradual improvement.

Daily Log* of Assertive Behavior in Naturally Occurring Interactions

PRIOR TO TRAINING PROGRAM

DATE	Behavior	Person	Satisfactory Aspects of Performance	Aspects of Performance that need Improvement	Overall Evaluation Excellent / Good Fair/ Poor
*Sample Entry					
3/19/77	Refuse Request	Mary (spouse)	Eye Contact	Content, sarcasm Suds score	Poor

*Make additional copies of this table as needed.

Daily Log* of Assertive Behavior in Naturally Occurring Interactions

DURING TRAINING PROGRAM

DATE	Behavior	Person	Satisfactory Aspects of Performance	Aspects of Performance that need Improvement	Overall Evaluation Excellent / Good Fair/ Poor

---

*Make additional copies of this table as needed.

ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING

Module #2 - Rights & Contracts

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WHO AM I INCLUSION EXERCISE

1. One fact which illustrates who I am today is? (Just got married; bought a new car, etc.)

2. My favorite feeling is? (The feeling I experience most often)

3. The secret fantasy I have about my future is? (I will be Prime Minister; a hobo, etc.)

BILL OF RIGHTS

1. Easily overlooked.

2. When we act non-assertively, we may ignore our rights.

3. Goal for assertion treatment is to believe in your rights as a person.

4. May be necessary to know when it is appropriate to assert your rights.

5. The right to say NO without feeling guilty (or having to come up with a good reason).

BILL OF RIGHTS - MOST COMMON ONES

1. The right to be treated with respect.

2. The right to have and express your own feelings and opinion. "I" statements, not 'you make me feel'.

3. The right to be listened to and taken seriously.

4. The right to set your own priorities.

5. The right to say NO without feeling guilty (or having to come up with a good reason.)

6. The right to ask for what you want knowing that others have the right to refuse.

7. The right to get what you pay for.

8. The right to ask for information from professionals.

9. The right to make mistakes.

10. The right not to assert yourself.

11. The right to change your mind.

12. The right to say "I don't know the answer."

13. The right to say "I need some time to think that over."

THE RIGHT TO BE WRONG

Failure doesn't mean you are a failure,
It does mean you haven't succeeded yet.

Failure doesn't mean you have accomplished nothing,
It does mean you have learned something.

Failure doesn't mean you have been a fool,
It does mean you had a lot of faith.

Failure doesn't mean you've been disgraced,
It does mean you were willing to try.

Failure doesn't mean you don't have it,
It does mean you have to do something in a different way.

Failure doesn't mean you are inferior,
It does mean you are not perfect.

Failure doesn't mean you've wasted your life,
It does mean you have a reason to start afresh.

Failure doesn't mean you should give up,
It does mean you must try harder.

Failure doesn't mean you'll never make it,
It does mean it will take a little longer.

Failure doesn't mean God has abandoned you,
It does mean God has a better idea!

ZINGERS

Where the implicit message is at odds with the explicit message.

	THE ZINGERS	ZAPPING THE ZINGERS
		(conversational replacements)
1.	I can't	- I won't, I haven't yet
2.	I should	- It would be better if
3.	You make me ____	- I am _____
4.	I'll try, maybe	- I will, I'm going to
5.	Would you, Can you, Could you?	- Will you?
6.	just, little	- remove the word
7.	sort of, kind of, maybe, hopefully	- be more specific
8.	I might ____	- I will ____
9.	you know, OK, like	- delete this punctuation pause
10.	but	- balance the priority, use "and"
11.	why	- focus on behavior and options use "what" or "how"
12.	I think	- I know

I HEAR (explicit message), what you REALLY mean is (implicit message).

ZINGERS

WHO:

Everyone has some zingers in his/her vocabulary. Zingers are especially problematic and noticeable with people who are resistant to change.

WHAT THEY ARE:

Zingers are words or statements that leave the listener with the impression that there is something incongruent in what is being said. The verbal message may not square with the non-verbal message, and the implicit statement is more important, and more powerful than the explicit message.

WHY:

People will use zingers as a means of avoidance behavior. Zingers are ways of avoiding making an implicit commitment by making an explicit commitment with a zinger in it.

WHERE:

Zingers make their appearance in our vocabulary when we are faced with stressful situations. Note that the stress is individually defined, and a situation that one person handles by using a lot of zingers will not necessarily be approached the same way by another person. One exception to this may be the counselling situation, where a counsellor may pick up, and echo the zingers of his or her teacher, and use the zingers as "jargon" punctuation points.

WHEN:

Zingers are most likely to be heard when an individual is under pressure to change.

HOW TO DEAL WITH ZINGERS:

1. WITH OTHERS -	Make a very respectful, confrontative statement to the person. Say something like "I hear you saying _ _ _ _ __, what you really mean is _ _ _ _ _.
2. WITH YOURSELF -	Make a self-contract to assume responsibility for what you mean to say as well as what you say. Remember that the implicit message is the more powerful one, so these issues will have to be resolved if you want real behavior change.

	PASSIVE BEHAVIOR	AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR	ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BEHAVIOR:	EMOTIONALLY DISHONEST INDIRECT, SELF-DENYING INHIBITED	(INAPPROPRIATELY) EMOTIONALLY HONEST/DIRECT SELF-ENHANCING AT EXPENSE OF ANOTHER (YOU STATEMENTS)	(APPROPRIATELY) EMOTIONALLY HONEST DIRECT, SELF-ENHANCING EXPRESSIVE (I STATEMENTS)
YOUR FEELINGS WHEN YOU ENGAGE IN THIS BEHAVIOR:	HURT, ANXIOUS AT THE TIME AND POSSIBLY ANGRY LATER, DEPRESSION	RIGHTEOUS, SUPERIOR DEPRECIATORY AT THE TIME AND POSSIBLY GUILTY LATER	CONFIDENT, SELF-RESPECTING AT THE TIME AND LATER
THE OTHER PERSON'S FEELING ABOUT YOU WHEN YOU ENGAGE IN THIS BEHAVIOR:	PITY, IRRITATION DISGUST	ANGRY, VENGEFUL	GENERALLY RESPECTFUL
END RESULTS IN RELATION TO INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	MANY FRIENDS BUT THEY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOU - DOORMAT	ALONE, NO FRIENDS	GOOD, TRUSTING

VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMPONENTS OF BEHAVIORS

	NON-ASSERTIVE	ASSERTIVE	AGGRESSIVE
I. VERBAL	Apologetic words. Veiled meanings. Hedging; failure to come to point. Rambling; disconnected. At loss for words. Failure to say what you really mean. "I mean" , "you know".	Statement of wants. Honest statement of feelings. Objective words. Direct statements, which say what you mean. "I" messages.	"Loaded words. Accusations. Descriptive, subjective terms. Imperious, superior words. "You" - messages, that blame or label.
II. NON-VERBAL			
A. General	Actions instead of words, hoping someone will guess what you want. Looking as if you don't mean what you say.	Attentive listening behavior. General assured manner, communicate-style caring and strength.	Exaggerated show of strength. Flippant, sarcastic Air of superiority.
B. Specific			
1. Voice	Weak, hesitant, soft, sometimes wavering.	Firm, warm, well-modulated, relaxed.	Tense, shrill, loud shaky, cold, "deadly quiet", demanding superior, authoritarian.
2. Eyes	Averted, down cast, teary, pleading.	Open, frank, direct, Eye contact, but not staring.	Expressionless; narrowed; cold; staring; not really "seeing" you.
3. Stance & Posture	Lean for support; stooped; excessive head nodding.	Well-balanced, straight-on, erect, relaxed.	Hands on hips, feet apart. Stiff & rigid; rude, imperious.
4. Hands	Fidgety, flattery, clammy.	Relaxed motions.	Clenched; abrupt gestures, finger- pointing; fist pounding.

YOUR OWN ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR HIERARCHY

INSTRUCTIONS: To construct your own hierarchy select as the first item or situation something you feel you could handle assertively with only minimal anxiety. Continue to order your items from least anxiety-provoking to most anxiety-provoking. The last items should be the behaviors or situations that cause you the greatest anxiety and discomfort.

1. ______________________________
____
2. ______________________________
____
3. ______________________________
____
4. ______________________________
____
5. ______________________________
____
6. ______________________________
____
7. ______________________________
____
8. ______________________________
____
9. ______________________________
____
10. ______________________________
____

CONTRACT

1. What kind of assertive behavior do I want to start doing?

2. What do I want to stop doing?

3. What kinds of changes might happen in my life?

4. How might I sabotage this plan?

NAME: ______________________
DATE: ______________________

STORY

Bill and Jonny Smith were seated in the dining car of a train en route to Vancouver from Montreal. As Bill looked out of the window of the train he saw a large bird silhouetted against the early morning sky, flying parallel to the direction of the train. He remarked that golden eagles were a rare sight on the eastern prairies, their usual habitat being amongst the mountains of the rockies. Jonny agreed saying that golden eagles could often be seen circling high over the mountain peaks.

STATEMENTS

Answer by marking F for factual and I for inferred.

1. The golden eagle was far from its usual habitat ____
2. Bill and Jonny were having breakfast ____
3. The train was en route to Vancouver ____
4. The bird was flying in the same direction as the train ____
5. The train was travelling in Canada ____
6. The bird in the story was a golden eagle ____
7. It was early morning ____
8. Jonny was a man ____
9. The train was passing through the eastern prairies at the time of the story ____
10. Bill and Jonny were travelling to Vancouver ____
11. Jonny had often seen golden eagles circling over the mountains ____
12. Bill and Jonny were either married or related ____

VERBAL COMPONENTS AND NON-VERBAL COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATING BEHAVIOR

VERBAL

1. Passive Aggressive verbal communication is:
    - Devious
    - Indirect
    - Subtle
    - Sneaky
    - Manipulative
    - Apologetic
    - Explaining
    - Offering excuses
    - Rambling
    - Disconnected
    - Blaming

Using phrases like 'you know'
'I guess'
'I mean'
'You bitch'
'How dare you'
'It's all your fault'
and uses editorial "we".

2. Assertive verbal communication is:
    - Direct
    - Honest
    - Spontaneous
    - States exactly what I mean
    - States exactly what I feel
    - States exactly what I think

So lets other know clearly what I feel, want and what my limits are.

Uses phrases like 'I want'
'I don't want'
'I feel angry'
'I feel scared'
'I feel excited'
'I feel sad'
'I will'
'I'm not going to'

Takes responsibility for ME

"I" messages--state (a) the facts as I see them.
(b) how I feel.
(c) how they connect me.

VERBAL COMPONENTS AND NON-VERBAL COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATING BEHAVIOR

NON-VERBAL

Questions: Are (1) and (2) congruent?

Passive-Aggressive Non-Verbal Components:	Assertive Non-Verbal Components:
Eye Contact:	
Avoid eye contact (looks up or down, closes eyes often, blinking.) Staring unblinking, "shifty", unseeing.	Direct eye contact. Seeing and focusing eye contact. Not staring.
Facial Expression:	
Incongruent with verbal message. Inhibited and disguised.	Congruent with verbal message.
Voice:	
Incongruent with verbal message. Questioning and hesitant. Inaudible, shaky, shrill, demanding tense.	Congruent with verbal message. May be self or loud if audible and relaxed.
Body and Stance:	
Again incongruent with verbal message. Slumping shoulders. Lowered head. Excessive head nodding. Leaning forward. Fingerpointing. Protruding jaw. Hands on hips. Abrupt gestures.	Congruent with verbal message. Eyes and head level. Body and movements will be balanced and relaxed.

Taken from: YOUR PERFECT RIGHT
by Alberti and Emmons

ONE STEP AT A TIME: THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR

> He that respects himself is safe from others; he wears a coat of mail that none can pierce.
>
> Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Perhaps you have heard it said that "when two engineers (lawyers, housekeepers, plumbers, nurses) are talking together and a psychologist walks up and joins the conversation, there are now two engineers and a psychologist, but when two psychologists are talking and an engineer (substitute your own favorite) walks up and joins them, there are now three psychologists!" Everyone believes she/he is a psychologist in some sense. Indeed, we all have some practical, first-hand knowledge of human behavior, beginning with ourselves.

CHANGING BEHAVIOR ATTITUDES

Unfortunately there are shortcomings in popular views of how people behave. One popular view which has been found by psychologists to be inaccurate is the notion that attitudes must be changed before one can change the way she or he acts. In our experience with hundreds of clients in clinical assertiveness training, it is now clear that behavior can be changed first, and it is easier and more effective to do so in most cases.

As you begin the process of becoming more assertive, we won't ask you to wake up some morning and say, "Today I am a new, assertive person!" You will find here instead a guide to systematic, step-by-step changes in behavior. The key to developing assertiveness is practice of new behavior patterns. This chapter is devoted to leading you through the steps involved in such practice, and showing how you can put the newly assertive behavior to work in your relationships with others.

We have observed a cycle of non-assertive or aggressive behavior which tends to perpetuate itself, until a decisive intervention occurs. A person who has acted non-assertively or aggressively in relationships for a long period of time usually has a poor self-image. His or her behavior towards others - whether self-denying or abusive - is responded to with "scorn, disdain, avoidance. Observing the response, this person says, See, I knew I was no damn good." Confirmed in this low self-evaluation, the inadequate behavior patterns are continued. Thus the cycle is repeated: inadequate behavior; negative feedback; attitude of self-depreciation; inadequate behavior.

The most readily observable component of this pattern is the behavior itself. We can easily see overt behavior in contrast with attitudes and feelings which may be hidden behind a practiced facade. In addition, behavior is the component most amendable to change. Our efforts to help you improve your interpersonal functioning and increase your valuing of yourself as a person focus on changing your behavior patterns.

The cycle can be reversed, becoming a positive sequence: more adequately assertive (self-enhancing) behavior gains more positive responses from others; this positive feedback leads to an enhanced evaluation of self-worth. ("Wow, people are treating me like a worthwhile person!"); and improved feelings about oneself result in further assertiveness.

Harold had for years been convinced that he was truly worthless. He was totally dependent upon his wife for emotional support, and despite a rather handsome appearance and ability to express himself well, had literally no friends. Imagine his utter despair when his wife left him! Fortunately, Harold was already in therapy at the time, and was willing to try to make contact with other people. When his first attempts at assertiveness with eligible young woman were successful beyond his wildest hopes, the reinforcing value of such responses to his assertions was very high! Harold's entire outlook toward himself changed rapidly, and he become much more assertive in a variety of situations.

Not everyone, to be sure, will experience such an immediate "payoff" for his/her assertions, and not all assertions are fully successful. Success often requires a great deal of patience, and a gradual process of handling more and more difficult situations. Nevertheless this example emphasizes a general rule we have found in facilitating assertive behavior: assertiveness tends to be self-rewarding. It feels good to have others begin to respond more attentively, to achieve one's goals in relationships, to find situations going one's way more often. And you can make these changes happen!

Remember to begin with assertions where you are somewhat certain of success before proceeding to more difficult ones requiring greater confidence and skill. It is often quite helpful and reassuring to obtain support and guidance from another person, perhaps a friend, teacher, or professional therapist.

Keep in mind that changed behavior leads to changed attitudes about oneself and one's impact upon people and situations. The balance of this chapter presents the steps involved in bringing about the changed behavior. Read all the material here carefully before you begin. Then return to this point and begin to follow the steps in your own life. You'll like the difference in you!

THE STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

STEP 1: Observe your own behavior. Are you asserting yourself adequately? Are you satisfied with your effectiveness in interpersonal relationships?

STEP 2: Keep track of your assertiveness. Keep a log or diary for a week. Record each day those situations in which you found yourself responding assertively, those in which you "blew it," and those you avoided altogether so that you would not have to face the need to act assertively. Be honest with yourself, and systematic.

STEP 3: Set realistic goals for yourself. Your self-assessment will help you to select specific targets for your growth in assertiveness. Pick out situations, or people, toward which you want to become more effective. Be sure to start with a small, low-risk step, to maximize your chances of success.

STEP 4: Concentrate on a particular situation. Spend a few moments with your eyes closed, imagining how you handle a specific incident (being short-changed at the supermarket, having a friend "talk your ear off" on the telephone when you had too much to do, letting the boss make you "feel like 2¢" over a small mistake). Imagine vividly the actual details, including your specific feelings at the time and afterward.

STEP 5: Review your responses. Write down your behavior in Step 4 in terms of the components of assertiveness (eye contact, body posture, gestures, facial expression, voice, message content, etc.). Look carefully at the components of your behavior in the recalled incident. Note your strengths. Be aware of those components which represent non-assertive or aggressive behavior. Do not attempt to force yourself into very painful situations. On the other hand, do not avoid new growth if it is only moderately uncomfortable!

STEP 6: Observe an effective model. At this point it would be very helpful to watch someone who handles the same situation very well. If the model is a friend, discuss his/her approach, and its consequences.

STEP 7: Consider alternative responses. What are other possible ways the incident could be handled? Could you deal with it more to your own advantage? Less offensively?

STEP 8: Imagine yourself handling the situation. Close your eyes and visualize yourself dealing effectively with the situation. You may act similarly to the "model" in Step 6, or in a very different way. Be assertive, but be as much your "natural self" as you can. Repeat this step as often as necessary until you can imagine a comfortable style for yourself which succeeds in handling the situation well.

STEP 9: Get help if you need it. As we have noted several times before, the process of becoming more assertive may require you to stretch yourself considerably. If you feel unable on your own to deal with the situations you have visualized, seek help from a qualified professional.

STEP 10: Try it out. Having examined your own behavior, considered alternatives, and observed a model of more adaptive action, you are now prepared to begin trying out for yourself new ways of dealing with the problem situation. A repeat of Steps 6, 7, and 8 may be appropriate until you are ready to proceed. It is important to select an alternative, more effective way of behaving in the problem situation. You may wish to follow your model and enact the same approach taken by him or her in Step 6. Such a choice is appropriate, but should reflect an awareness that you are a unique person, and you may not find the model's approach one which you could feel good about adopting for yourself. After selecting a more effective alternative behavior, you now should role-play the situation with a friend, teacher, or therapist, attempting to act in accord with the new response pattern you have selected. As in Steps 2, 4, and 5, make careful observation of your behavior, using available mechanical recording aids whenever possible.

STEP 11: Get feedback. This step essentially repeats Step 5 with emphasis on the positive aspects of your behavior. Note particularly the strengths of your performance, and work positively to develop weaker areas.

STEP 12: Behavior shaping. Steps 8, 10, and 11 should be repeated as often as necessary to "shape" your behavior - by this process of successive approximations of your goal - to a point wherein you feel comfortable dealing in a self-enhancing manner with the previously threatening situation.

STEP 13: The real test. You are now ready to test your new response pattern in the actual situation. Up to this point your preparation has taken place in a relatively secure environment. Nevertheless, careful training and repeated practice have prepared you to react almost "automatically" to the situation. You should thus be encouraged to proceed with an in vivo trial. If you are unwilling to do so, further rehearsals or help may be needed (Repeat steps 8-12). Again, remember that doing, honestly, spontaneously, is the most important step of all.

STEP 14: Further training. You are encouraged to repeat such procedures as may be appropriate in the development of the behavior pattern you desire. You may wish to undertake a similar program relative to other specific situations in which you wish to develop a more adaptive repertoire of responses.

STEP 15: Social reinforcement. As a final step in establishing an independent behavior pattern, it is very important that you understand the need for on-going self-reinforcement. In order to maintain your newly-developed assertive behavior, you should achieve a system of reinforcements in your own social environment. For example, you now know the good feeling which accompanies a successful assertion and you can rest assured that this good response will continue. Admiration received from others will be another continuing positive response to your growth. You may wish to develop a check list of specific such reinforcements which are unique to your own environment. One good idea: start saying positive statements to yourself, rather than self defeating put downs!

Although we emphasize the importance of this systematic learning process, it should be understood that what is recommended is not a lock-step forced pattern without consideration for the needs and objectives of each individual. You are encouraged to provide a learning environment which will help you to grow in assertiveness.

No one system is "right" for everyone. We encourage you to be systematic, but to follow a program which will meet your own unique individual needs. There is, of course, no substitute for the active practice of assertive behavior in your own life, when you choose to, as a means of developing greater assertiveness and enjoying its accompanying rewards.

A GENTLE SHOVE

Now that you know what is involved in the process of developing assertive behavior, don't allow yourself to remain a passive observer. If you are interested enough to read this far, you are either thinking seriously about improving your own assertiveness or considering how you can help others to become more assertive. In either case, do something about it! You cannot change solely by sitting there reading this manual. If we don't move you to action in your own life, we have served only as a diversion and we are disappointed. If, on the other hand, you go out now and handle one interpersonal situation more in your own best interests, we are pleased to have had a part in your growth.

Try it!

A BEHAVIORAL MODE FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

Dr. Carl Rogers in his 1961 book On Becoming A Person, has identified three characteristics of personal growth. These lend themselves to use as models in the process of developing personal growth. The checklist has been developed by Dr. Albert based upon Rogerian phrases:

"AN INCREASING OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE"

How recently have you

- participated in a new sport or game?
- changed your views on an important (political, personal, professional) Issue?
- tried a new hobby or craft?
- studied a new language or culture?
- spent fifteen minutes or more paying attention to your body feelings, senses (relaxation, tension, sensuality)?
- listened for fifteen minutes or more to a religious, political professional, or personal viewpoint with which you disagreed?
- tasted a new food, smelled a new odor, listened to a new sound?
- allowed yourself to cry? or to say "I care about you"? or to laugh until you cried? or to scream at the top of your lung capacity? or to admit you were afraid.
- watched the sun (or moon) rise or set? or a bird soar on the wind's currents? or a flower open to the sun?
- travelled to a place you had never been before?
- made a new friend? or cultivated an old friendship?
- spent an hour or more really on communication (actively listening and responding honestly) with a person of a different cultural or racial background)?
- taken a "fantasy trip" - allowing your imagination to run freely for ten minutes to an hour or more?

"INCREASING EXISTENIAL LIVING"

How recently have you

- done something you felt like doing at that moment, without regard for the consequences?
- stopped to "listen" to what was going on inside you?
- spontaneously expressed a feeling - anger, joy, fear, sadness, caring - without "thinking about it"?
- done what you wanted to instead of what you thought you "should" do?

- allowed yourself to spend time or money on an immediate "payoff" rather than saving for tomorrow?
- bought something you wanted "on impulse"?
- done something no one (including you) expected you to do?

"AN INCREASING TRUST IN ONE'S ORGANISM"

How recently have you

- done what felt right to you, against the advice to others?
- allowed yourself to experiment creatively with new approaches to old problems?
- expressed an unpopular opinion assertively in the face of majority difficult problem?

MODULE #2 - HOMEWORK

1) Assertion: A Personal Experience Record.

2) Test your Own Assertiveness Quotient.

ASSERTION: A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE RECORD

Describe two situations in the past two weeks when you have successfully asserted yourself. Include who was involved (that is, their relationship to), what was involved (the situation), when and where this took place, what you did, and what the result was (that is, your feelings, and the other peoples' feelings and behavior).

1.

2.

Describe two situations in the past two weeks when you would have liked to assert yourself but did not. Include who was involved, what was involved, when and where this took place, and what the result was. Also include what you would have liked to do differently and the reason (if you are aware of it) why you stopped yourself from asserting yourself.

1.

2.

TEST YOUR OWN ASSERTIVENESS QUOTIENT

Test your assertiveness quotient (AQ) by completing the following Questionnaire. Use the scale below to indicate how comfortable you are with each item:

1. makes me very uncomfortable.
2. I feel moderately comfortable.
3. I am very comfortable with this.

There may be some situations which are not relevant to you nor to your particular lifestyle; in such cases, try to imagine how comfortable you might feel if you were involved in the situation.

AQ TEST

ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR

- Speaking up and asking questions at a meeting
- Commenting about being interrupted by a female directly to her at the moment she interrupts you
- Commenting about being interrupted by a male directly to him at the moment he interrupts you
- Stating your views to a male authority figure
- (e.g. minister, boss, therapist, father)
- Attempting to offer solutions and elaborating on them
  - a) in a one on one situation
  - b) in a small group
  - c) in a large group

YOUR BODY

- Entering and exiting a room where people are present
- Speaking in front of a group
- Maintaining eye contact, keeping your head upright, and leaning forward when in a personal conversation

YOUR MIND

- Going out with a group of friends when you are the only one without a "date"
- Being especially competent, using your authority and / or power without labeling yourself as "bitchy", impolite, bossy, aggressive, castrating, or parental"
- Requesting expected service when you haven't received it (e.g. in a restaurant or a store)

APOLOGY

- Being expected to apologize for something and not apologizing since you feel you are right
- Requesting the return of borrowed items without being apologetic

COMPLIMENTS, CRITICISM, AND REJECTION

- Receiving a compliment by saying something assertive acknowledge that you agree with the person complimenting ________
- Accepting rejection ________
- Not getting the approval of the most significant person in your life and / or any person ________
- Discussing another person's criticism of you openly with that person ________
- Telling someone that she / he is doing something that is bothering you ________

SAYING "NO"

- Refusing to get coffee or to take notes at a meeting where you are chosen to do so because you are a female ________
- Saying "no" -- refusing to do a favor when you really don't feel like it.
- Turning down a request for a meeting or date ________

MANIPULATION AND COUNTER-MANIPULATION

- Telling a person when you think she / he is manipulating you ________
- Commenting to a male or female who has made a patronizing remark to you (e.g. "You have a good job for a woman" "You're not flighty, emotional, stupid, or hysterical like most women) ________

SENSUALITY

- Telling a prospective lover about your physical attraction to him / her before any such statements are made to you ________
- Initiating sex with your partner ________
- Showing physical enjoyment of an art show or concert in spite of others' reactions ________
- Asking to be caressed and / or telling your lover what feels good to you ________

ANGER

- Expressing anger directly and honestly when you feel angry ________
- Arguing with another person ________

HUMOR

- Telling a joke ________
- Listening to a friend tell a story about something embarrassing, but funny, that you have done ________
- Responding with humor to someone's put-down of you ________

CHILDREN

- Disciplining your own children ___
- Disciplining others' children ___
- Explaining the facts of life or your divorce to your child ___

Women Together

- Talking about your feeling of competition with another man/woman with whom you feel competitive ___

___

Taken from: The Assertive Woman -- by: Stanlee Philps and Nancy Austin.

Assessing Your Body Language

Assertive body language is congruent with what is being said verbally, adds strength and emphasis to what is being said, and is generally self-assured.

Aggressive body language conveys an exaggerated sense of self-importance, overbearing, strength, and / or an air of superiority.

Nonassertive body language conveys weakness, anxiety, and lack of self-confidence. It softens the impact of what is being said verbally to the point that the verbal message loses most of its power. This is particularly true when the person's verbal message and body language are in conflict with each other, for example, laughing when saying, "I'm really angry with you." In general, when there is such a discrepancy between a verbal message and a body language message, other people seem to take the body language message more seriously. Use the following system to check your body language:

OK = Satisfactory level; S = Some improvement needed; L = Lots of improvement

EYE CONTACT

Assertive	Aggressive	Nonassertive
___ Comfortably direct	___ Looking down nose	___ Looking away or down
	___ staring off into distance with bored expression	___ blinking rapidly

FACIAL EXPRESSION

___ Open, frank, relaxed

___ Clenching teeth
___ Flaring nostrils
___ jutting jaws
___ pursed, tight-lipped mouth

___ constant smiling
___ smiling, laughing, or winking when expressing irritation
biting or wetting lips
___ swallowing or clearing throat
___ tensing and wrinkling forehead

VOICE AND SPEECH EXPRESSION

___ appropriately firm
___ appropriately warm
___ expressive, emphasizing key words
___ clear

___ overly rapid
___ deadly quiet
___ overly loud or strident
___ sarcastic or condescending

___ overly soft
___ mumbled
___ whiney
___ monotone
___ overly slow

GESTURES

___ Well-balanced
___ erect

___ relaxed
___ hand gestures phasizing key words

___ pounding fists
___ stiff and rigid

___ finger waving or
___ shaking head as if other person isn't to be believed
___ hands on hips

___ covering mouth or lower face with hand
excessive head nodding
tinkering with clothing/jewelry
___ constant shifting of weight
___ scratching or rubbing header other parts of body
___ wringing / rubbing hands
___ wooden body posture

NOTE: Research has yet to clearly establish which of these body language behaviors is critical in communicating assertion, aggression and nonassertion.

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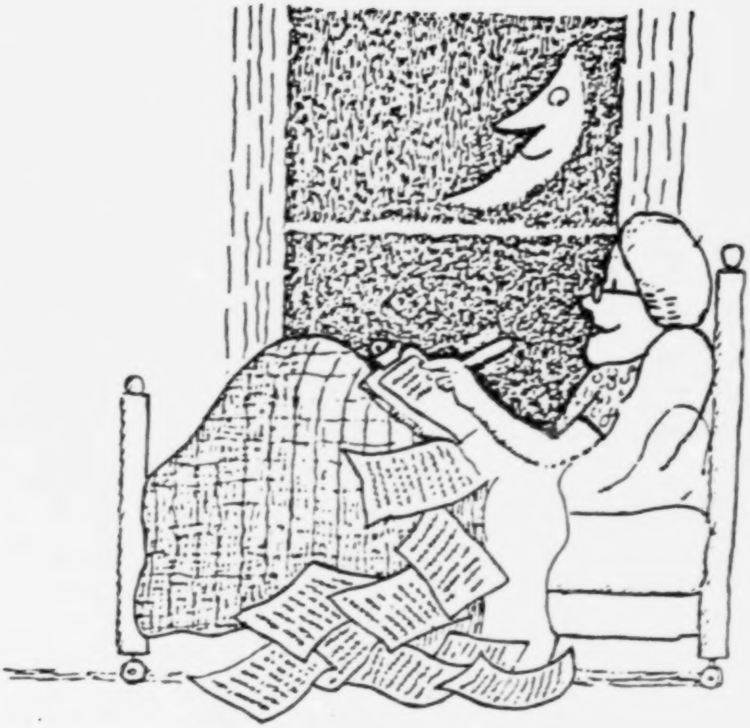
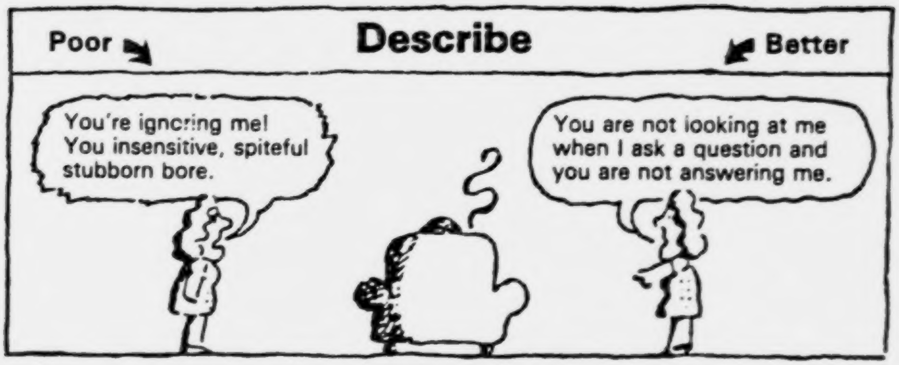
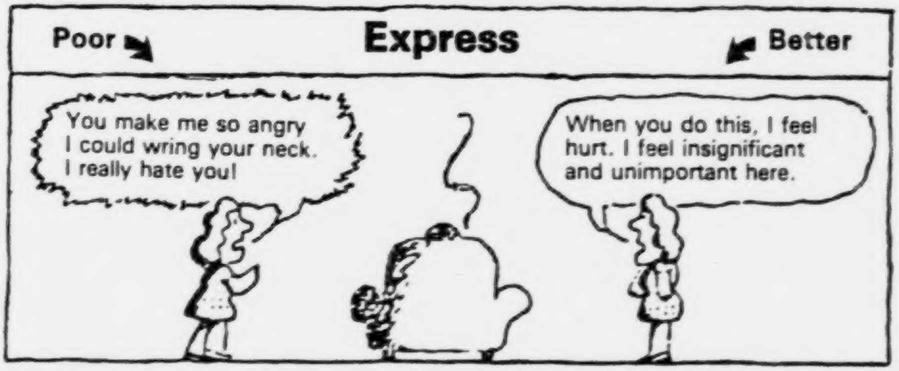
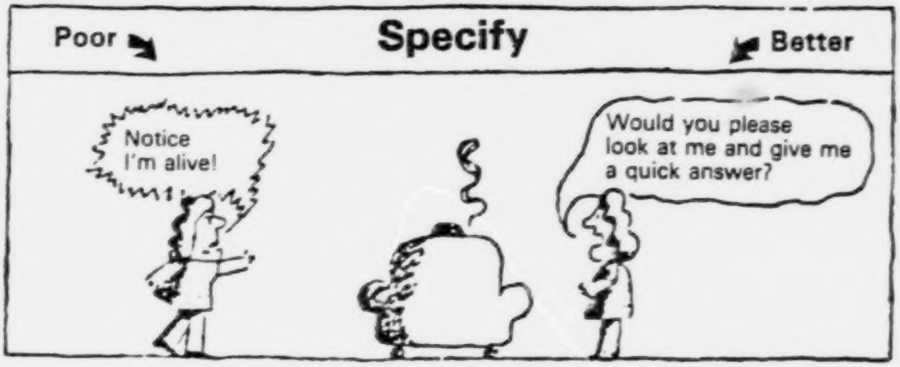
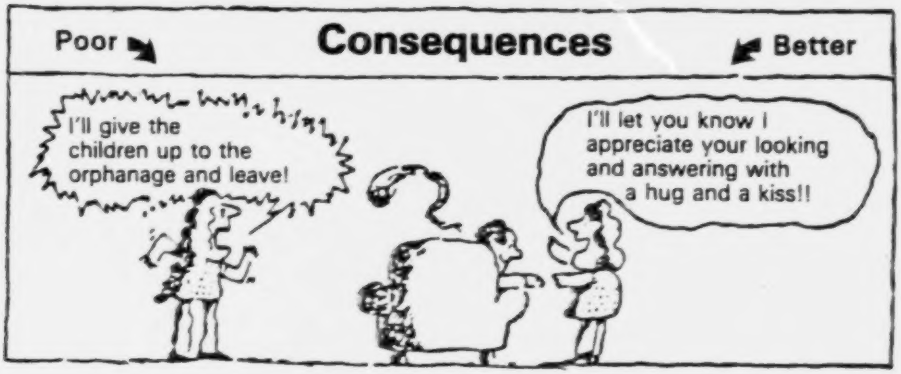


Time out for script-writing


Poor
Describe
Better
You're ignoring me! You insensitive, spiteful stubborn bore.
You are not looking at me when I ask a question and you are not answering me.


Poor
Express
Better
You make me so angry I could wring your neck. I really hate you!
When you do this, I feel hurt. I feel insignificant and unimportant here.


Poor
Specify
Better
Notice I'm alive!
Would you please look at me and give me a quick answer?


Poor
Consequences
Better
I'll give the children up to the orphanage and leave!
I'll let you know I appreciate your looking and answering with a hug and a kiss!!

DESC SCRIPTING:
A NEW APPROACH FOR
DEALING WITH CONFLICTS

Speaking without thinking is like shooting without aiming.
OLD PROVERB

A WAY OF NEGOTIATING POSITIVE CHANGES

In conflicts with other people most people respond in the old primitive way: flight or fight. DESC Scripting is a technique offering a different approach, that of negotiating. Because running away or fighting rarely solve the problem, the same problematic situations recur over and over. Negotiation techniques offer the greatest chance of a problem being solved as well as maintaining dignity and respect on all sides. DESC Scripting can be used with mates, friends, relatives, children bosses, co-workers, and even businesses.

Five reasons for writing out a script are as follows:

1. Writing out your script gives you some small concrete task as a starting point toward assertion.

2. Writing out your script forces you to clarify the situation and define your needs; you stop and think objectively about your actions.

3. A script gives you confidence in handling the next confrontation assertively because you know what your "considered proposals" are going to be. You avoid stupid, thoughtless outburst you will later regret.

4. Because you might often say things in a self-defeating way, it is important that you plan out the right words which will express what you want. By reading and revising your lines you can hit upon the intended message with just the right balance. You have a written record of your planned message which you can review for its effectiveness instead of relying on your memory.

5. For a maximum effect an assertive message must be delivered in a forceful voice and with affirmative body language. A well-planned and well-rehearsed assertive message is a major antidote to "stage fright" in the put-down situation. The best way to practice voice tone, phrasing, and gestures is by repeatedly going over a known set of lines you will say to your Downer.

DESC Scripting

- an important approach for dealing with interpersonal conflict
  choice with conflict
  1. Fight
  2. Knuckle under
  3. Negotiate for change (e.g. car lot)
     - each give up a little so mutually satisfactory exchange can be made.
- most interpersonal conflicts tend to occur over and over again
  Elements
  1. Characters - who
  2. Plot - what usually happens
  3. Setting - time and place (where and when)
  4. Script - the "how" - what the other person usually does - whether or not threats, insults, bulleying, fright occurs.

- By planning ahead, one can change key areas of these elements, most particularly the script.
- Why write a script - to plan, control, gain confidence, practice clarify situation

- Script writing involves

  Describe --- what is happening, explicitly and and concretely.

  Express --- your feeling with "I" statements that avoid provoking or blaming, try to state in positive manner (e.g. not I hate it when you do that. I feel your behavior and my reaction to it are preventing us from having a more pleasant relationship

  Specify --- desired new behavior; reasonable and that the other person can meet, negotiate for behaviors for both parties.

  Consequences - emphasize positive consequences.

REVIEW OF DESC SCRIPTING

1. Best time to write a DESC Script
    - when quiet, relaxed and reflective
    - take "time out" to compose self
    - practice with a friend
2. Steps for writing and delivery a DESC Script
    - Prepare ahead - write script
    - Focus on the problem.
    - Edit script, step by step.
    - Role play other person to anticipate his responses.
    - Brainstorm replies.
    - Practice the revised script.
    - Get feedback about your delivery.
        - Voice tone, rate, force
        - Eye contact
        - Body Language - hands, fidgits, posture
        - Facial Expressions.

DESC SCRIPTING

Practice writing sample scripts

1. Protesting unjust criticism - exercise re neighbour or friend constantly criticizing your dress, manners, child-rearing, etc.

2. Saying no to unreasonable demands - being asked to collect for charity, work involving 4 nights a week and excessive responsiblities.

have group members
1. Write
2. Edit
3. Brainstorm
4. Role Play
5. Feedback

EXAMPLE

Practice #1 - Neighbour (good friend criticizes dress you've just bought).

DESCRIBE - I just bought this dress and I'm very pleased with it. However, you just told me it looks terrible.

EXPRESS - When you said that, I felt put down, like my taste in clothes wasn't any good. I also felt angry about being criticized. I'm concerned because I've noticed that this happens between us whenever I buy something new.

SPECIFY - From now on, I would like you only to comment about my clothes if you like them.

CONSEQUENCES- If you do this, I'll feel much better about my relationship with you.

SAMPLE SITUATIONS FOR DESC SCRIPTS:

1. You are in the habit of lending your clothes to your daughter, and borrowing hers.
   However, you feel that your daughter doesn't take care of your clothes properly.

2. You have hired a counsellor to work in a professional office. You are dissatisfied with her grooming and dress standards.
3. You have a full-time job. On weekends you find that household chores keep you inside all day, and take up the entire day.
   Your husband spends most of the weekends working outside on the lawn, garden, painting, etc.
   You would like to share certain chores, so you get a variety & some fresh air.
4. You are at a banquet at the Sheraton. Just as you begin your dessert the man next to you lights up a cigar. You dislike cigar smoke ...
5. Your daughter is complaining about the amount of time you spend going to your assertive training classes. She wants help with her sewing.

6. You are skiing at a resort. A "hot-shot" skier keeps scaring you by skiing directly at you, and then stopping at the final moment.
7. You are in charge of mail preparation at night. The accountant is in the habit of bringing a load of envelopes at 4:20, that takes 20 minutes to process; you should be through work at 4:30.
8. You are the new supervisor on the job. Your steno keeps telling you the boss before you handled things differently; it bugs you.
9. You did enumeration work for the election, for which you expect to be paid. You phone the woman who hired you to find out when you may expect your cheque; she says she "hasn't the foggiest idea".
10. Friends are visiting you. Their 2-year old is attracted to your stereo and wants to play with it; the parents make no attempt to stop him.

D- describe the behavior (objectively)
E- express your feelings(calmly)
S- state the behavior your want (explicitly)
C- consequences (make them positive)

LEVELS OF MUSCLE

This refers to the question of how much do you use to deal with a situation.
Reference is Pamela Butler's book: A Guide to Becoming Fully Androgynous.

LEVEL ONE: State the request.
LEVEL TWO: Repeat the request with emphasis.
LEVEL THREE Repeat the request and state consequences.
LEVEL FOUR Carry through with the consequences.

This process can be carried to any length with which you feel comfortable, or you may choose not to get into the process at all.

BASIC COPING METHODS FOR CRITICISM

SURPRISE !!!

The expected or surprise element of criticism is what most of us find immobilizing. One can always think of smart retorts or ways to handle things differently hours or days after the occurrence. Therefore, rule number one is BE PREPARED (the same as the Boy Scouts' motto).

Preparation involves:

1. Self-inventory of possible criticizable behaviors.
2. Learning and practicing responding to various types of criticism.

CRITICISM

FEAR OF CRITICISM- The Main Block to Assertive Behavior

Feedback from assertiveness training group invariably designates learning how to handle criticism as one of the most valuable skills learned in the group. Nearly everyone, in one situation or another, falls prey to criticism. Most people fear and dislike this form on conflict and have numerous negative feelings associated with past experiences. When the anticipated outcome of any event, or one's anticipated response, is thought to be negative, it is not unusual to avoid or deny conflict.

Some conflict in relationships is inevitable.
There is no growth without conflict.

DEFINITION

Originally, the Greek word kritikos meant "able to discern or judge," and was not conceptualized as a totally negative happening. The intent of criticism was to communicate, to influence, and to motivate; in other words, criticism helped on by pointing the way towards new resources and skills and assisted in determining what needed changing.

The original two-sided concept of criticism has become eroded and today is thought of in solely negative terms. This is supported by most dictionaries which define criticize as "to stress the faults of." It has been proposed by some authors that we need to redefine the word as follows:

> criticize: to communicate information to others in a way that enables them to use it to their advantage
>
> and
>
> criticize: a tool to encourage and enhance personal growth and relationships.

A.A., Al-Anon, and other self-help groups simply adopted another word in its place: inventory. That is, to take stock of one's resources - both positive and negative. This technique is also used in personal work on criticism.

Criticism mainly falls into two categories: Valid and Invalid. A personal inventory may resemble the following:

VALID

-procrastinate doing my bank
-book balancing.
-spend more than I need for clothes
-do not sort personal belongings,
-photographs, etc. and keep losing them.
-get too involved with work, leaving no time for fun (sometimes)

INVALID

- a poor driver.
- not a fair partner, selfish.
- stingey with money.
- hate travelling and vacation
- lazy, stupid and a poor student.

WAYS OF RESPONDING

Primarily there are two basic responses: agree or disagree. After these two basic ones are learned, three others are also helpful. These are: delay, fogging, and issue sorting or limit setting.

1. Agreeing or accepting the criticism.
   This is the quickest way of stopping criticism, since the criticizer is taken by surprise.

2. Disagreeing or not accepting criticism.
   There are many times when criticism is simply based on error or misinformation. If a criticism does not fit, it is important to disagree. Disagreement consists of two parts: disagreeing and self-affirmation. This is not the same as rationalizing or defending. It is simply getting the facts straight and also serves to stop self criticism. The following is an example:

CRITICISM	DISAGREEMENT AND SELF-AFFIRMATION
You're too demanding	I don't agree. I feel I'm learning to be assertive.
You spend too much time in your work.	I can't accept that. I feel that I'm doing something important to me.
You're selfish.	I disagree. At last I'm trying to take care of myself.
You can't get close to other people.	That's really not true. Relating to others is one of my strongest points.
You're overly concerned.	No. I feel that I devote my full attention to issues that need that amount of concern.
You're never organized.	I find that I am very organized with those activities which are important to me.

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSES

3. LIMIT SETTING

Note: There is a subtle yet distinct difference between criticism and a put down; therefore, the response needs to be different.

Inquiring as to the intent of the message (e.g "Are you trying to put me down?") may be sufficient. An example of a put down would be: "you're fat and ugly," you're stupid" or "you're a very boring person." Limit setting for the purpose of protecting one's personal dignity needs to be employed here - if one is interested in continuing the relationship.

4. DELAYING

This is the response of choice when one is caught totally off guard or suspects that *part* of the criticism may not be valid. Responses may be as follows:

> "I'm really surprised by what you say. Let me get back to you about it.
> I don't know how to answer you right now. Let me think about it.
> I'm a little taken aback by that. Let me consider it for a bit.

5. FOGGING (not highly recommended)

This is useful when the criticism does not arouse a strong emotion and one simply needs to"deal" with the situation as in the book and film *When I Say No I Feel Guilty* by Manual Smith. Pamela Butler *in Self-Assertion for Women* describes it thusly:

> Fogging is a response to criticism that does not say "yes" or"no". If I am fogging, I neither agree nor disagree with a criticism. Instead, I briefly acknowledge that a person has criticized me and then quickly move on to another subject. The analogy I like to use in explaining fogging is this: If I walk through a fog bank, I am not changed by it in any way. The fog has no effect on me or on the direction I am travelling. A whimsical contrast to walking through fog is walking through a briar patch. If I walk through a briar patch, I am pricked and scratched. I have to spend a great deal of time unhooking my clothes from the snagging briars. I have to walk very carefully to keep from getting caught, and I am exhausted when I finally get out of the area. But if I walk through fog, nothing touches me.
> How do I change a potential briar patch into a fog bank I can use some basic expressions such as "You *may* be right," "I *can* see how you *might* think that," or "Sometimes, I *may* be selfish." Notice the italicized words. These words allow me to avoid accepting or disagreeing with a criticism.
> I usually give the following example of fogging to assertion workshops: If someone said to me, "Pam, you're a selfish person," or "That *may* be true." The accusation of being selfish does not particularly bother me."

EXAMPLES

Pamela Butler gives the following example of a group member, Theresa, handling criticism by using the different responses.

> GROUP MEMBER 1: You aren't talking much tonite (mildly critical).

THERESA: I know. I really feel like just sitting here and listening. (Accepting the criticism).

GROUP MEMBER 2: You never say anything in the group.

THERESA: Well, I disagree. Today I have been exceptionally quiet, but I usually contribute to the group. (Focused disagreement, self-affirmation).

GROUP MEMBER 3: You'll never get anything out of the group if you don't talk about yourself.

THERESA: You may be right, but I really don't feel like talking tonight. (Fogging, setting limits).

GROUP MEMBER 4: You're just a distant person. You don't want to get close to anyone else.

THERESA: I can't accept that. Getting close to other people isn't one of my problems. (Disagreeing, self-affirmation).

GROUP MEMBER 5: If you would just get off your high horse and come down to reality, you might see yourself as you really are.

THERESA: Wait just a minute. I really resent what you just said. I don't want to talk about this further. (Setting limits)

GROUP MEMBER 6: You're getting defensive.

THERESA: I'll have to think about that, but right now I don't want the group focusing on me. (Delaying, setting limits).

HOW TO EXPRESS NEGATIVE FEELINGS ASSERTIVELY

Directly expressing negative feelings is a difficult assertion for many people (women and men alike). Since anger, resentment, and annoyance have not been considered appropriate feminine emotions, however, this difficulty is compounded for women. When first beginning to assert negative feelings, many women are concerned over the counter-responses of other people. Certainly, if a women aggressively attacks someone else, she can expect to receive a negative reaction in return. However, the chance of a negative counter-reponse is minimized if she can express herself assertively. Assertiveness here involves at least two considerations: the distinction between "I" messages and "you" messages and the use of "muscle".

"I" MESSAGES VERSUS "YOU" MESSAGES

Assertive expression generally involves what might be called "I" messages. I feel, I resent, I am angry. "I" messages convey that I have feelings and that my feelings are my own responsibility. In contrast, aggressive expression usually involves "you" messages. Another person is attacked or labeled in a negative way. You should not do that. You are bad. You are a rude person.

Dr. Thomas Gordon was one of the first psychologists to recognize the importance of "I" messages. In his book Parent Effectiveness Training, Gordon urged parents to share their feelings with their children by way of "I" messages rather than scolding them with "you" messages. For example, instead of "Don't you have any manners? You sound like a couple of hyenas," Gordon would encourage a parent to say something like "I don't like so much noise in the living room." Gordon emphasized parent-child communication, commenting that adults generally send "I" messages to other adults. Although this may be true in "polite company," my own experience is that adults frequently send "you" messages to other adults. Employers send "you" messages to their husbands, and vice versa. In fact, the probability that a person will send a "you" message when angry is so high that consistent practice and attention is necessary to alter the habit.

Take Susie as an example. Susie's best friend Claire abruptly canceled plans to go to a concert with her when Claire's boyfriend Dan dropped by. Susie was annoyed, but she passively accepted Claire's explanation without objection. However, in the assertive group Susie practiced expressing her true feelings. Much to her consternation, she kept slipping into "you" messages. Rather than "I felt annoyed when our plans were canceled. I would like for that not to happen again," Susie moralized to Claire, "You shouldn't have canceled our plans. You should have known that I couldn't find anyone else to go with me. You were just inconsiderate!"

Even after three practices, Susie continued to tell Claire what she should and should not do. Her fourth attempt to express her feelings to Claire occurred in reality. Her practice had apparently helped, because the following week Susie told the group that she had successfully asserted herself without once using the aggressive message you should.

Why so much emphasis on the "I" - "You" distinction? Before answering that question, I would like to take just a moment to do a brief experiment with you. If I were to say to you, "You're wrong," what would your reaction be? How would you respond? How would you feel? If you are like many women, your reply might be, "Who do you think you are?" or "No, I'm not." You might feel angry or defensive or want to withdraw. If, on the other hand,.I were to say to you, "I disagree," how would you react? Again, if you respond as most women, you might feel, "That's okay" or "You're entitled to your own opinion." You would probably feel less negative (maybe not negative at all)about my latter statement. The simple shift of a statement from a "you" message to an "I" message can result in a great difference in another person's feeling. In my own experience, aggressive expression (a "you" message) almost always leads another person to counterattack or defend. A "you message feels like an intrusion. Alternatively, "I" messages offer no intrusion or put down. An "I" message allows the greatest chance for increased understanding.

Eric Berne's system of Transactional Analysis provides a useful framework for examining the differences between "you" messages and "I" messages. According to Berne, every person operates from each of three positions: a Parent Position, an Adult Position, and a Child Position. In other words, each person has a Parent part, an Adult part, and a Child part. Our Parent part consists of all the shoulds and should nots we are taught by our parents and society. Our Child part represents the feelings experienced by us when we are children. Our Adult part acts as a computer, helping us to make decisions based on our current experience as well as on past information.

When anger is expressed from the Parent, it is usually by moralizing, scolding, or name calling. The Parent typically relies on "you" messages. "You shouldn't do that" or "You don't ever do anything right" or "You're a bad (selfish, rude, childish, and so on) person." When we hear a Parent remark, most of us remember the scolding "you" messages from our own parents, and react back as angry children, "Don't tell me what to do" or "You're a nag." Alternatively, negative feelings expressed from the Adult position will usually call forth a complimentary Adult response from the other person. The statement, "I don't like to be teased" typically leads to the counter Adult response of "I'm sorry. I'm really just expressing my affection for you."

Let us analyze the interaction of Jill and James in terms of Parental "you" messages and Adult "I" messages. Jill and James have been married for a little over a month. Tonight for the first time since their marriage they are going out to dinner and then to the theater with friends. After leaving the restaurant, Jill takes James aside, and the ensuing dialogue takes place:

> Jill: You were really rude to me in the restaurant. I wasn't even finished with my dessert when you suggested to everyone else that we leave for the theater. You need some training in etiquette. (Here Jill is speaking from her critical Parent position. She does not reveal her feelings but instead lectures James from her parental rule book of shoulds and should nots.)
>
> James: You're never satisfied. All you do is nag. Next time, I won't even take you and your friends out. (James responds as any attacked child by defending, counterattacking, and then withdrawing).

Jill and James do not speak for the rest of the evening. A small but important misunderstanding has escalated into their first marital quarrel. Jill begins to question the value of sharing her feelings with James. James vows to himself that he will not be treated like a child again.

Were both Jill and James to replay the situation in an assertive manner, a different result would be likely:

> Jill: I was upset that you suggested that we leave before I was finished with my dessert. I would like you to ask me if I'm finished before suggesting that we leave. (Notice that Jill simply states what she does not like without attacking James' character or putting him in a Child position. Furthermore, she takes responsibility for her own needs and tells James what she would like to occur in future situations. James is not left with the duty of solving Jill's problem for her.)
>
> James: I'm sorry, Jill, I really didn't realize that you hadn't finished. I guess I was anxious to get to the theater. I'll try to check with you first next time. There's one thing I'd like to ask you to do though. If I forget next time, it's not intentional, so just speak up and tell me to slow down. I won't get mad. (James corrects Jill's possible misperceptions about the intention of his remark. He gives her some information as to his position at the time, that is, "I was anxious to get to the theater." He acknowledges both her feelings and her request for him to change his behavior. James also asserts his own desire for Jill to feel free to express herself at the moment.)

> Though an assertive dialogue (using "I" rather than "you messages and stating feelings rather than attacking), Jill and James have a better understanding of each other. Rather than closing off communication, the sharing of negative feelings has enhanced their understanding of each other. TRANSLATING FEELING INTO EXPRESSION: In the assertive training workshop, one question is frequently asked: "How can I express my negative feelings? There are many times when my feelings are so intense that all that I experience is rage. When that happens I can't think of anything to say." Expressing negative feelings assertively is a skill that can be learned. Assertive expression involves taking a gut feeling and translating that feeling into an "I" message. This kind of translation takes practice. When provoked, the spontaneous response of many women is to attack the aggressor either verbally or physically. Yet since most women fear the consequences of such an attack, they stifle their expression and do not react at all.This was the case with Chris, a nineteen-year-old college student majoring in English. About ten minutes before her assertive workshop began, Chris was treated in a way she did not like. She had been unable to respond assertively to the incident. Chris admitted that the only response she could think of was an aggressive one. "I wanted to walk over to the man and kick him in the shins. Instead, I said nothing."

Chris described the situation to the group:

> I was talking to Mary, a friend of mine about taking the assertive training class. A man was standing nearby, and I guess he overheard our conversation. When I asked Mary where the ladies' room was, he broke in, "Why don't you just go to the men's room. It's over there." It was his sarcastic way of equating assertiveness with masculinity.

As we discussed Chris' alternative to kicking the man in the shins, one group member suggested, "If it were me and I had simply put my gut feeling into words, I would have said to the man, I really resent that comment! He would have known my feelings without my having to attack him or dissect his personality."

Why not attack? Ellen, another woman in the group, countered with the question, "Why not attack? He deserved it. Why not tell him he's a male chauvinist pig? Why take care of his feelings? You'll never see him again any way." Ellen's question essentially asked, "Why limit self expression to being assertive?"

This is an important issue. In every group, a similar question is asked. Ultimately, each woman must answer the question for herself. My own view is that any feeling can be expressed assertively. I can express my anger, even my rage, in an assertive manner. Therefore, I really have no need to respond aggressively. Aggressive reactions usually take place when a person feels that she or he has no alternative but to act aggresssively. Feelings build up to the point where there is no choice. Examined from this perspective, it can be seen that aggression does not emanate from a position of power and control but from one of impotence. The woman or man who reacts hysterically or who periodically has an aggressive outburst (a temper tantrum) is not the person who is generally respected or listened to.

Moreover, for many women, aggressive expression leaves a bitter aftertaste. After the anger of the moment subsides, guilty self-punishing thoughts begin to surface. "Why did I have to explode?" "I really went down to his level." Maybe another reaction would have caused him to change his attitude." When a woman has responded assertively, there is no need for guilty recriminations.

MUSCLE

The second parameter to consider in expressing your negative feelings is the level of muscle. Muscle is a concept I have found very useful with all self-assertion, but particularly with the expression of negative feelings. I first began to use muscle as an assertive technique after talking one afternoon to a friend of mine named Karen.

Karen, in the course of our conversation, told me about an experience she had when flying back to San Francisco from a vacation in the East. Her vacation had been fun, but she was saturated from talking with other people and also exhausted. All she wanted was to spend her return flight relaxing, maybe sleeping, maybe reading a book. However, Karen soon found that the man sitting next to her had different needs. He was in the mood to talk. Now, Karen did not assert herself. She did not say, "I'm tired from my trip and don't feel much like talking today. "Instead, she took the passive or indirect approach and began to "hint" to her uninvited traveling companion that she did not want to talk. She perfunctorily answered several of his questions. She stared intently at her book, trying to signal him nonverbally that she was not interested in carrying on a conversation. Her indirect action had no effect. Feeling extremely annoyed, and by now at the boiling point, Karen shouted, "I don't want to talk!" The man appeared stricken, and although Karen apologized for the intensity of her response, she felt guilty for the rest of the trip.

Karen's response, "I don't want to talk" was assertive. She slated her feeling with an "I" message. She did not attack or name call. However, Karen used a club to rid herself of her annoyance when a feather would probably have done the job. In other words, Karen used too much muscle. The intensity of her response did not fit the demands of her situation.

The degree of muscle is an important aspect of self assertion. As I am using the term, muscle essentially means strength. A woman will usually feel uncomfortable with her assertion unless the level of muscle fits the intensity of the event. I personally prefer to begin my assertions at the lowest level of muscle. Not only do I use the smallest amount of energy I need, but I also ensure that I do not inadvertently intrude upon another person. If the first level of muscle does not suffice, I am perfectly willing to move on to a higher level. Thus, if someone were kicking the back of my chair in a movie, I would turn around and politely request, "Would you please not kick the back of my chair. It's bothering me. "This is level-one muscle, and most people would respond by ceasing their kicking. In many cases, the person would not have realized that she or he was bothering me. A more intense response would have been unnecessary.

If the intrusion persisted, if the person behind me continued to kick my chair, I would go to level-two muscle. "I don't want you to kick my chair again." This statement would have been expressed with increased verbal and nonverbal intensity. My words would be straight to the point. My voice volume, tone of voice, and facial expression would all be conveying more force. Whereas this level of muscle would initially have sounded rude, it is now appropriate to the situation in which another person continues to intrude upon my territory.

BACKING UP WORDS WITH ACTION: If the individual continues to kick the back of my chair, I would move to the third level of muscle. "If you kick my chair again, I am going to get the usher." At the third level of muscle, I let the other person know the consequences of failing to comply with my request. Although going to the usher initially would have been unnecessarily severe, now this action fits the circumstances.

At level-three muscle (even at level-two muscle), many women begin to back down. They decide that the issue just is not worth facing a confrontation. They fail to use the power at their command for fear of "creating a scene." A common question about this third level of muscle reveals both the anxiety and the confusion it generates. "What is the difference between a consequence and a threat? Someone will ask with concern. On the gut level of course, a threat is a dirty word. No one wants to be accused of making a threat. For this reason alone it is important to recognize that a threat and a consequence are not the same. A threat is aggressive; a consequence is protective. A consequence simply adds to our power to prevent another person from taking advantage of us.

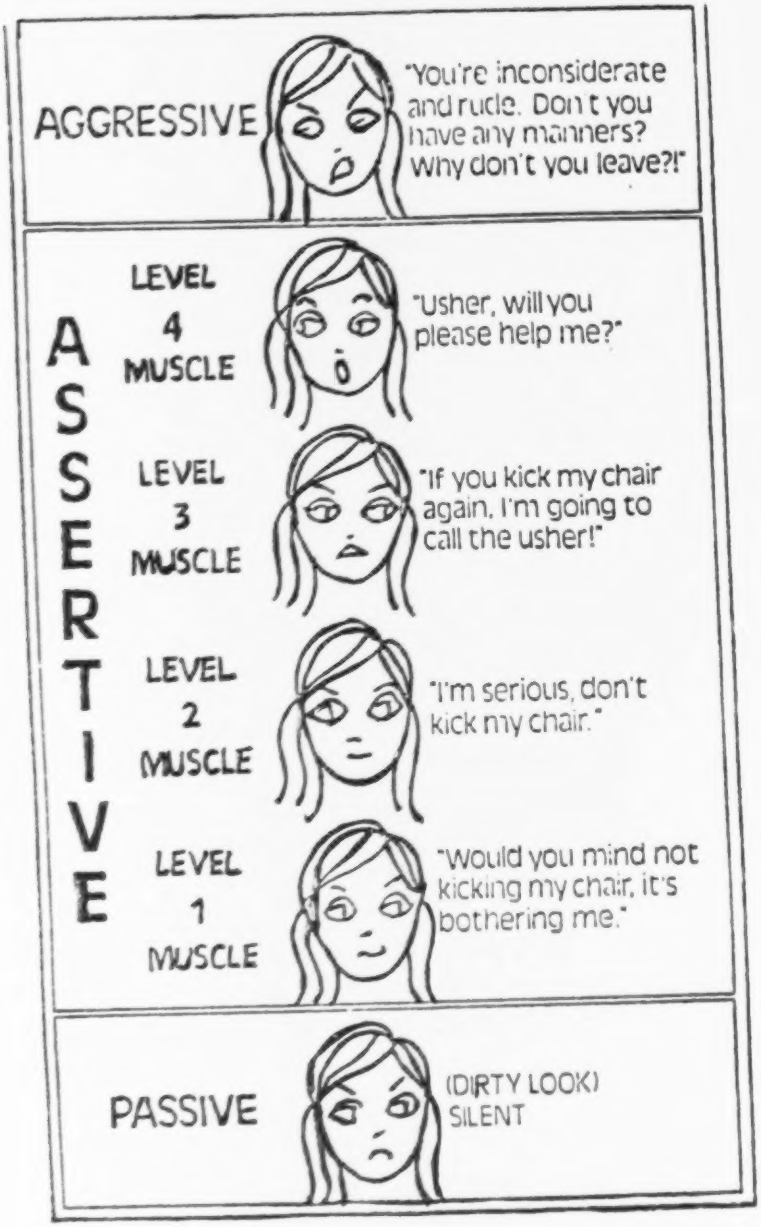
At the fourth level of muscle, I would carry out the consequence. If the person kicking my chair did not stop, I would indeed go to the usher. If I fail to back up my consequence with action, I am simply teaching other people that my words do not matter. Figure illustrates the four muscle levels on the next page.

As we have noted, moving from a lower level of muscle means changing both the verbal and nonverbal components of self-assertion. Nonverbally, as I have already mentioned, increased muscle may mean a louder voice volume, a firmer tone of voice, and a more serious facial expression. Verbally, different words convey an increase in muscle level. "I would rather" is lower muscle than "I want." "I insist" or "I demand" is higher muscle yet. Our assertion is most powerful when the level of verbal and nonverbal muscle is sufficient to handle the situation.

HIGH-LEVEL MUSCLE

There are obviously some situations where a person is not able to progress from one level of muscle to another. The magnitude of the situation and the intensity of the emotion calls for the immediate use of high level muscle. Jean, a graduate student in biology, shared an apartment with two other women. Jean was conducting an experiment for her masters thesis and had a litter of white mice as subjects. She kept the mice in her closet so she could carefully regulate the number of hours they were exposed to light. Jean had warned her roommates never to go into the closet, because by turning the light on or off, they could upset her research. One afternoon, Jean came back from class and found her roommate Lois rummaging in her closet. Lois had turned the light on, perhaps destroying Jean's experiment. Lois looked up when Jean came in, but she offered no apology or explanation. In fact, as Lois left the room, her only comment was "I was looking for one of your sweaters to borrow." Jean was livid with rage. She was also speechless, totally unable to express her anger. She spent the night upset, unable to go to sleep.

Although a week had passed since the incident occurred, Jean continued to feel unable to express her feelings, even in a role-playing situation. Jean asked if anyone else in the assertive group could demonstrate how they would handle the encounter because he honestly did not know what to say. Technically, Jean's inhibition was caused as much by a behavioral deficit (a term used by behavior therapists to describe the absence of an appropriate response) as by anxiety. Even if Jean had been perfectly calm, the lack of knowledge about what to say would have kept her in a passive position.


AGGRESSIVE
"You're inconsiderate and rude. Don't you have any manners? Why don't you leave?!"
ASSERTIVE
LEVEL 4 MUSCLE
"Usher, will you please help me?"
LEVEL 3 MUSCLE
"If you kick my chair again, I'm going to call the usher!"
LEVEL 2 MUSCLE
"I'm serious, don't kick my chair."
LEVEL 1 MUSCLE
"Would you mind not kicking my chair, it's bothering me."
PASSIVE
(DIRTY LOOK)
SILENT

Without being either passive or aggressive, a person has a wide range of responses available to him/her. Different muscle levels allow him/her to fit his/her response to the intensity of the situation.

The problem here for Jean, as for many other women, was that she had never seen another woman express anger without losing something in return. She had never had a model of a woman who was effectively assertive in expressing her negative feelings.

Susan, another member of the group who also had some difficulty expressing anger, volunteered to play out the situation with Jean. Jean decided in the first rehearsal to play the role of her intrusive roommate.

> Jean: (walking toward the door): I was looking for one of your sweaters.
> Susan: (in a "reasonable" tone of voice): Jean, I told you that I didn't want you to go into my closet because I was doing an experiment and didn't want it to be disturbed.

By the time Susan had completed her sentence, Jean had walked out of the room. Susan quickly saw how she had let her "reasonableness" get in the way of expressing her anger. In terms of power and impact, telling someone what you think is very different from telling them what you feel. In Susan's next practice, she relied more on her feeling response and less on her logic.

> Jean: (walking out of the room): I was looking for one of your sweaters
> Susan: Jean, I don't want you ever to go into my closet again. I am furious with you. I never want you to do that again.
> Jean: What did I do?
> Susan: My experiment may be ruined. I am just disgusted. I mean, never do that again. Is that clear?

Jean nods, acknowledging Susan's statement. Notice that Susan not only expressed her current feelings, but she also told Jean what she expected in the future. Susan's forceful words as well as her firm tone and stern facial expression frightened some of the group members. Many of them had never seen a woman use her anger in a powerful way.

EXPRESSING ANGER WITHOUT ANXIETY

Before a woman is completely free to express anger (or for that matter, to hear another person express anger), she must become comfortable with both anger's verbal and its nonverbal aspects. A woman must be able to increase her voice volume without anxiety. She must be able to maintain a firm facial expression. She must be able to confront another person with direct eye contact. She must feel comfortable with strong forceful language. Many women respond with anxiety to at least one of these components. Some women find that anxiety is triggered by all the components. This anxiety can prevent a woman from ever really experiencing angry feelings. It can even cause her to substitute crying for angry expression.

Margaret, for example, worked part time as a secretary to help with her college expenses. One day Margaret's supervisor severely criticized her for misplacing a file. The criticism was unjust. The file was not Margaret's responsibility, and she knew nothing about the incident. Margaret recognized that her internal feeling state was rage. This had not been the first time she had felt unjustly accused. In fighting to hold back her anger, Margaret began to cry. The intensity of her feelings demanded some release, and crying was the less frightening alternative.

When women substitute crying for expressing anger, they are sometimes rewarded. Most men will stop their provocation, even give in to a women's wishes when she begins to cry. But the woman is the loser in the long run. Her indirect approach strengthens the traditional view that women are overly emotional and excitable. It reinforces the argument that women cannot be truly responsible.

The women who wants to express her anger as anger needs both permission and practice. Permission is necessary because within the confines of stereotyped femininity, anger is not allowed. Practice is needed because until a woman learns that the floor does not sallow her up, the roof does not cave in, or people do not run away when she expresses anger, she will continue to experience anxiety. This learning is emotional, not intellectual. Women obviously know on an intellectual level that expressing anger does not lead to a catastrophe. However, when a woman first attempts to assert her anger, she may feel that something terrible will happen.

Within the assertive training group, we usually have one exercise where every one has the opportunity to practice expressing anger. Preferable this initial practice involves a non-personal situation or a situation low on a woman's hierarchy. In learning to express negative feelings, a graduated approach is important. The exercise I mentioned involves members sharing various anger provoking experiences, one of which is chosen for group practice. By re-creating the intrusive situation through role playing, each woman is allowed to practice asserting her negative feelings. Those women who have had the least difficulty expressing anger begin first. They serve as models for those women who follow. Among the provoking situations chosen by the various groups have been the following:

1. Before moving out of their home, Judy's neighbors dug up her rosebushes to take with them.

2. Lynne told her physician that she wanted to be referred to as Mx. Atkinson. He sarcastically replied, "If you are Ms., then call me Drrr (a mis-pronunication of Dr.).
3. Phyllis was practicing the piano in her apartment. Friends of her roommate came into the practice room and began talking. When Phyllis asked them politely to leave, they refused.

As each woman practices voicing her anger, the remainder of the group gives feedback about her voice volume, facial expression, and assertive stance. Many women repeat the rehearsal several times before they are able to maintain a firm, strong voice and can refrain from smiling. The differences between the first attempt and the second or third are often dramatic. Many women within the group actually begin to feel their anger for the first time as they become freer in their self-expression.

You may want to practice responding to one of the anger-provoking situation described above (or to one of your own). You can practice alone or , better yet, act out the situation with a friend. If you have felt uneasy with your anger, begin by adding one component at a time. Start off by simply expressing your angry feelings assertively with "I" messages such as "I resent," "I don't like," or "I am angry about." This is not as easy as it sounds. Some women find that they must write out a brief script to keep their verbal message assertive.

Once you have mastered this first step, try to express your negative feelings by looking directly at your friend or, if you are practicing alone, by looking in the mirror. Notice any tendency to look away. At the end of your assertion, try to maintain your eye contact for a brief period of time. This lets the other person know that you mean what you say. In the third practice, increase your voice volume until it is stronger than usual. Make sure your voice is firm and to the point. When you complete your assertion, does your tone go up or down? It will go down if you are making a firm statement and not asking a question. Finally, try putting the components together. Do not be afraid to be intense or have emotion. Remember that anger is a legitimate feeling. The more you practice the assertive expression of anger, the easier it will become.

GIVING AND RECEIVING COMPLIMENTS

Taken from: Assert Yourself! by Galassi and Galassi

GIVING COMPLIMENTS

Being able to give compliments and express appreciation in an assertive manner is an important skill. We feel that people have the right to provide positive feedback to others about specific aspects of behavior, dress, and so on, which they appreciate. For example, " Mary, it was very kind of you to run that errand for me when you realized that I was going to be late." If you feel warm and complimentary toward someone or about something, you have the right to express that feeling regardless of whether others share you feelings. It is a rare occasion indeed when a compliment hurts another person.

There undoubtedly are many reasons why it is important to give compliments and to express appreciation when it is justified. Among them are the following:

1. Other people enjoy hearing sincere, positive expression about how you feel about them.
2. Expressing compliments results in deepening and strengthening the relationship between two people.
3. When people are complimented, it is less likely that they will feel unappreciated or taken for granted.
4. Those instances in which you have to express negative feelings or stand up for legitimate rights with an individual are less likely to result in a high-pitched, emotional confrontation if they occur in a relationship in which you previously have complimented the individual about other aspects of his/her behavior. In other words becomes embarrassed, I can say, "I just wanted you to know that this is the way I feel." I cannot and should not force the other person to accept the compliment or to give me one in return. All I can do is give the compliment, and that's that.

RECEIVING COMPLIMENTS

Receiving a compliment is similar to giving a compliment in that the manner in which it is handled influences both individuals in the interchange. It is important to accept a compliment gracefully. A compliment is a subjective evaluation by another person. If you do not accept the compliment or you make it difficult for the other person to give it, you are either questioning the validity of that judgment or the honesty of the person giving the compliment. For example, assume that a person compliments you on a suit that you are wearing. Your response is, "This old thing?" or "You don't really mean that." What your response communicates is either that the person giving the compliment has poor taste in clothing or that he/she is an insincere flatterer. Of course, there are situations in which a compliment is undeserved, and you assert yourself and indicate that you appreciate the compliment but that it not warranted (for example, Sally/Joe did the report for which you are being complimented).

Accepting a compliment involves at a minimum acknowledging it with a simple thank you, a smile, or a sentence such as, " I appreciate hearing that." In addition, if you agree with the compliment, you may wish to comment briefly on it: "I'm glad you like my suit. It is my favorite.: I'm pleased that you like the report. I worked very hard on it, and I was pleased with the results."

Often when people have difficulty giving compliments, it is because they hold certain misconceptions or counter-productive attitudes that interfere with their behavior. As we have mentioned before, these attitudes often are idiosyncratic, but they must be disputed when they are encountered, and they must be replaced with more productive attitudes.

MODULE #3 -- HOMEWORK

1. Reading
2. DESC Script Practise Sheet

From: "Asserting Yourself" by - Bower and Bower

TABLE 1 RULES FOR ASSERTIVE DESC SCRIPTS

NUMBER		DO	DON'T
DESRIBE	D1	Describe the other person's behavior's objectively.	Describe your emotional reaction to it.
	D2	Use concrete terms	Use abstract, vague terms.
	D3	Describe a specified time, place and frequency of the action.	Generalize for "all time".
	D4	Describe the action, not the "motive".	Guess at your Downer's motive of goals
EXPRESS	E1	Express your feelings.	Deny your feelings
	E2	Express them calmly.	Unleash emotional outburst.
	E3	State feelings in a positive manner, as relating to a goal to achieved.	State feelings negatively making put-down or attack.
	E4	Direct yourself to the specific offending behavior, not to the whole person.	Attack the entire character of the person.
SPECIFY	S1	Ask explicitly for change in your Downer's behavior.	Merely imply that you'd like a change.
	S2	Request a small change.	Ask for too large a change.
	S3	Request only one or two changes at one time.	Ask for too many changes.
	S4	Specify the concrete actions you want to see stopped, and those you want to see performed.	Ask for changes in nebulous traits or qualities.
	S5	Take account of whether your Downer can meet your request without suffering large losses.	Ignore your Downer's needs or ask only for your satisfaction.
	S6	Specify (if appropriate) what behavior you are willing to change to make the agreement.	Consider that only your Downer has to change.

	NUMBER	DO	DON'T
CONSEQUENCES	C1	Make the consequences explicit.	Be ashamed to talk about rewards and penalities.
	C2	Give a positive reward for change in the desired position.	Give only punishments for lack of change.
	C3	Select something that is desirable and reinforcing to your Downer.	Select something that only you might find rewarding.
	C4	Select a reward that is big enough to maintain the behavior change.	Offer a reward you can't or won't deliver
	C5	Select a punishment of a magnitude that "fits the crime" of refusing to change behavior.	Make exaggerated threats.
	C6	Select a punishment that you are actually willing to carry out.	Use unrealistic threats.

TABLE 2 POOR VERSIONS OF JOAN'S SCRIPT

	VERSION	RULE VIOLATED	RULE NUMBER
DESCRIBE	1.You're always nagging	Generalizes ("always") Vague label.	D3 D2
	2.You're always out to dominate me.	Generalizes ("always") Infers motives.	D3 D4
	3.You make me uptight	Describes self, not other.	D1
EXPRESS	1.I hate you.	Extreme emotional outburst. Negative Attacks whole person	E2 E3 E4
	2.I don't feel anything about you anymore.	Denies feelings. Attacks whole person.	E1 E4
	3.That makes me angry.	Negative.	E3
SPECIFY	1.Stop nagging me!	Nebulous trait. Too large Satisfies only you.	S4 S2 S5
	2.Just shut up!	Too large a request. Loss to other. Satisfies only you.	S2 S4 S5
	3.You should know how to	Ask explicitly.	S1

VERSION	RULE VIOLATED	RULE NUMBER
	Nebulous request.	S4
	Satisfies only you.	S5
1.I'll throw you out. of the house.	No reward.	C2
	Unreasonable punishment.	C5
	Willing to carry out?	C6
2.I'd smile more if you'd leave me alone.	Desirable enough?	C3
	Big enough reward.	C4
3.We'll get along better.	Not explicit.	C1
	Big enough reward.	C4

DESC SCRIPT PRACTISE SHEET

Step 1. DESCRIBE the other person's offensive behavior in objective terms. Look, observe, examine exactly what he or she has been saying and doing. Describe the behavior concretely here (if it is an impersonal problem with a company, describe the problem).

Your DESCRIBE Lines

a) Does your description clarify the situation, or does it just complicate it? Replace all terms that do not objectively describe the behavior or problem that bothers you. Be specific.

b) Have you described a single specific behavior or problem, or a long list of grievances? Focus on one well-defined behavior or problem you want to deal with now. One grievance per script is generally the best approach.

c) Have you made the mistake of describing the other person's attitudes, motives. ** Revise you DESCRIBE lines now, if necessary.

Step 2. EXPRESS Your feelings or though about this behavior or problem in a positive, new way.

Your EXPRESS Lines

a) have you acknowledged your feelings and opinions as your own, without blaming the other person? Avoid words that ridicule or shame the other person. Swear words and insulting labels (dumb, cruel, selfish, racist, idiotic, boring) very likely will provide defensiveness and arguments.

b) Have you expressed your feelings and thought in a positive, new way? Avoid your "old phonograph record" lines that your Downer is tired of hearing and automatically turns off.

c) Have you kept the wording low-key? Aim for emotional restraint, not dramatic impact.

** Revise you EXPRESS lines now, if necessary.

Step 3. SPECIFY One behavior change you want the other person to make. Ask for agreement.

Your SPECIFY Lines*

a) Have you proposed only one small change in behavior at this time?

b) Can you reasonably expect the other person to agree to your request?

c) Are you prepared to alter your own behavior if your Downer asks you to change? What are you prepared to change about your behavior?

d) What counterproposals do you anticipate and how will you answer them?

** Revise your SPECIFY lines now, if necessary.

Step 4. Stipulate the CONSEQUENCES you will deliver (or what will happen) if the other person keeps the agreement to change.

Positive: ______________________________

If necessary, tell your Downer what negative consequences you will provide if there is no change. Write them here, but understand that you do not say them unless it becomes necessary.

Negative: ______________________________

Your CONSEQUENCES Lines *

a) Have you stressed positive, rewarding consequences?

b) Is the reward you selected really appropriate for the other person? Perhaps you should ask what you might do for the other person?

c) Can you realistically carry through with these consequences?

** Revise your CONSEQUENCES Lines now, if necessary.

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BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR IMPROVING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

1. PARAPHRASE: Stating in your own way what the other's remark conveys to you.

EXAMPLE: "Is this ... (Statement)... an accurate understanding of your idea?"
"Would this be an example of the point you made? ... (then stating a specific example)."

2. BEHAVIOR: DESCRIPTION Reporting specific, observable actions of others without making accusations or generalizations about their motives, personality or character traits.

EXAMPLE: That's the third time you have said you agreed with a statement of mine and then added "but" and expressed agreement with the opposite."
"Jim and Harry have done nearly all the talking and the rest of us have said very little."

3. DESCRIPTION: OF FEELINGS Specifying or identifying feelings by name, simile, figure of speech, or action urge.

Describe your own feelings: Reporting your own inner state as explicitly as you can - making sure the statement indicates the feelings are in you.

EXAMPLES: " I feel ... embarrassed." (naming)
... like a tiny frog in a huge pond.: (simile)
... like hugging you." (action urge)
" I just swallowed a bushel of spring sunshine." (figure of speech)
" I'm very fond of you. I care about you." (naming)

4. PERCEPTION: CHECK Describing what you perceive to be the other's inner state in order to check whether you do understand what he feels.

EXAMPLE "You look like you felt hurt by my comment. Did you?" I get the impression you'd like to change the subject. Is this correct?" "You seem to be feeling more at home now.".

TO UNDERSTAND THE OTHER AS A PERSON....

... Check to make sure you understand his idea, information and suggestions as he intended them (Skill - Paraphrase).

... Check to make sure you accurately understand what he feels ... his inner state. (Skill - Perception Check).

TO HELP OTHER UNDERSTAND YOU AS A PERSON....

... Describe what others did that affects you personally or as a group member. (Skill - Behavior Description).

... Let others know as clearly and unambiguously as possible what you are feeling. (Skill - Description of your own feelings).

John L. Wallen
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
1968

PARAPHRASE

A BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILL FOR IMPROVING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The problem: Tell somebody your phone number and he will usually repeat it to make sure he heard it correctly. However, if you make a complicated statement most people will express agreement or disagreement without trying to insure that they are responding to what you intended. Most people seem to assume that what they understand from a statement is what the other intended.

How do you check to make sure that you understand another person's ideas, information, or suggestions as he intended them? How do you know that his remark means the same to you as it does to him?

Of course, you can get the other person to clarify his remark by asking, "What do your mean?" or "Tell me more." or by saying "I don't understand." However, after he has elaborated you still face the same question. "Am I understanding his idea as he intended it to be understood?" Your feeling of certainty is no evidence that you do in fact understand.

The Skill: If you state in your own way what his remark conveys to you, the other can begin to determine whether his message is coming through as he intended. Then, if he thinks you misunderstand, he can speak directly to the specific misunderstanding you have revealed. I will use the term "paraphrase" for any means of showing the other person what his idea or suggestion means to you.

Paraphrasing, then, is anyway of revealing your understanding of the other person's comment in order to test your understanding.

An additional benefit of paraphrasing is that it lets the other know that you are interested in him. It is evidence that you do want to understand what he means.

If you can satisfy the other that you really do understand his point, he will be more willing to attempt to understand your views.

Paraphrasing, thus, is crucial in attempting to bridge the interpersonal gap. (1) It increases the accuracy of communication, and thus the degree of mutual or shared understanding. (2) The act of paraphrasing itself conveys feeling -- your interest in the other, your concern to see how he views things.

Learning to Paraphrase: People sometimes think of paraphrasing as merely putting the other person's ideas in another way. They try to say the same thing with different words. Such word-swapping may merely result in the illusion of mutual understanding as in the following example:

Sarah:	Jim should never have become a teacher.
Fred :	You mean teaching isn't the right job for him?
Sarah:	Exactly! Teaching is not the right job for Jim.

Instead of trying to reword Sarah's statement Fred might have asked himself, "What does Sarah's statement mean to me?" In that case the interchange might have sounded like this:

Sarah:	Jim should never have become a teacher.
Fred :	You mean he is too harsh on the children? Maybe even cruel?
Sarah:	Oh, no. I meant that he has such expensive tastes that he can't ever earn enough as a teacher.
Fred :	Oh, I see. You think he should have gone into a field that would have insured him a higher standard of living.
Sarah:	Exactly! Teaching is not the right job for Jim.

Effective paraphrasing is not a trick or a verbal gimmick. It comes from an attitude, a desire to know what the other means. And to satisfy this desire you reveal the meaning his comment had for you so that the other can check whether it matches the meaning he intended to convey.

If the other statement was general, it may convey something specific to you:

Larry:	I think this is a very poor textbook.
You :	Poor? You mean it has too many inaccuracies?
Larry:	No, the text is accurate, but the book comes apart too easily.

Possibly the other's comment suggest an example to you:

Laura:	This text has too many omissions; we shouldn't adopt it.
You :	Do you mean, for example, that it contains nothing about the Negro's role in the development of America?
Laura:	Yes, that's one example. It also lacks any discussion of the development of the arts in America.

If the speaker's comment was very specific, it may convey a more general idea to you:

Ralph:	Do you have 25 pencils I can borrow for my class?
You :	Do you just want something for them to write with? I have about 15 ball-point pens and 10 or 11 pencils.
Ralph:	Great. Anything that will write will do.

To develop your skill in understanding others, try different ways of (1) conveying your interest in understanding what they mean, (2) revealing what the other's statements mean to you. Find out what kinds of responses are helpful ways of paraphrasing for you.

The next time someone is angry with you or is criticizing you, try to paraphrase until you can demonstrate that you understand what he trying to convey as he intends it. What effect does this have on your feelings and on his?

John L. Wallen
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
1968

BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTION

A BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILL FOR IMPROVING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS.

The Problem: If you and another person are to discuss the way you work together or what is happening in your relationship, both of you must be able to talk about what each of you does that affects the other. This is not easy. Most of us have trouble describing another's behavior clearly enough that he can understand what actions of his we have in mind.

Instead of describing the other person's behavior we usually discuss his attitudes, his motivations, his traits and personality characteristics. Often our statements are more expressive of the way we feel about the other's actions than they are informing about his behavior. And yet we may be unaware of our feelings at the time.

Let's suppose you tell me that I am rude (a trait) or that I don't care about your opinion (my motivation). Because I am not trying to be rude and because I feel that I do care about your opinion, I don't understand what you are trying to communicate. We certainly have not moved closer to a shared understanding. However, if you point out that several times in the past few minutes I have interrupted you and have overridden you before you could finish what you were saying, I receive a clearer picture of what actions of mine were affecting you.

The skill: Behavior description means reporting specific, observable actions of others (1) without placing a value on them as right or wrong, bad or good (2) without making accusations or generalizations about the other's motives, attitudes, or personality traits.

You try to let others know what behavior you are responding to by describing it clearly enough and specifically enough that others know what you observed. To do this you must describe visible evidence -- actions that are open to anybody's observation. Sometimes, for practice, it is helpful to try beginning your description with "I see that ...: or "I hear you say ..." to remind yourself that you are trying to describe specific actions.

EXAMPLES: "Jim, you've talked more than others on this topic. Several times you cut others off before they had finished.

Not: "Jim, you're too rude!" which names a trait and gives no evidence.

Not: "Jim, you always want to hog the center of attention!" which imputes an undesirable motive or intention.

"Bob, you've taken the opposite of nearly everything Harry has suggested today.:

Not: "Bob, you're just trying to show Harry up." which is an accusation of undesirable motivation.

Not: "Bob, you're being stubborn." which is name calling.

"Sam, you cut in before I had finished."

Not: "Sam, you deliberately didn't let me finish." The word "deliberately" implies that Sam knowingly and intentionally cut you off. All that anybody can observe is that he did cut in before you had finished.

To develop skill in describing behavior you must sharpen your observation of what actually did occur. You must force yourself to pay attention to what is observable and to hold inferences in abeyance. As you practice this you may find that many of your conclusions about others are based less on observable evidence than on your own feelings of affection, insecurity, irritation, jealousy, or fear. For example, accusations that attribute undesirable motives to another are usually expressions of the speaker's negative feelings toward the other and not descriptions at all.

DESCRIPTION OF FEELINGS

A BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILL FOR IMPROVING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The problem: To communicate your own feelings accurately or to understand those of others is difficult.

First, expressions of emotion take many different forms. Feelings can express themselves in bodily changes, in action, and in words.

Second, any specific expression of feeling may come from very different feelings. A blush, for example, may indicate that the person is feeling pleased, but it may also indicate that he feel annoyed, or embarrassed, or uneasy.

Likewise, a specific feeling does not always get expressed in the same way. For example, a child's feeling of affection for his teacher may lead him to blush when she stands near his desk, to touch her as he passes her, to watch her as she walks around the room, to tell her "You're nice," to bring his pet turtle to show her, etc., -- different forms of expression for the child's feeling of affection.

Communication of feelings, thus, is often inaccurate or even misleading. What looks like an expression of anger, for example, often turns out to result from hurt feelings or from fear.

A further obstacle to the accurate communication of feelings is that your perception of what another is feeling is based on so many different kinds of information. When somebody speaks, you notice more than just the words he says. You note his gestures, voice tone, posture, facial expression, etc. In addition, you are aware of the immediate present situation -- the context in which the interaction is occurring. You are aware of whether somebody is watching, for example. And so you make assumptions about how the situation influences what the other is feeling. Beyond all of this you also have expectations based on your past experiences with the other.

You make inferences from all of this information -- his words, non-verbal cues, the situational context, your expectations of the other. These inferences are influenced by your own current emotional state. What you perceive the other to be feeling, then, often depends more upon what you are feeling (e.g., to be afraid of or wishing for) than upon the other person's actions or words. For example, if you are feeling guilty about something, you may perceive others as angry with you. If you are feeling depressed and discouraged about yourself, others may seem to be expressing disapproval of you.

And so -- communicating your own and understanding the feelings of others is an extremely difficult task. And yet, if you wish others to respond to you as a person, you must help them understand how you feel.

Likewise, if you are concerned about the other as a person and about your relationship with him, you must try to understand his emotional reactions.

The skill: Although we usually try to describe our ideas clearly and accurately, we often do not try to describe our feelings clearly. Feelings get expressed in many different ways, but we do not usually attempt to identify the feeling itself.

One way to describe a feeling is to identify or name it. "I feel angry". "I feel embarrassed". "I feel comfortable with you". However, we do not have enough names or labels to encompass the broad range of human emotions, and so we invent other ways to describe our feelings, such as the use of similes. "I feel like a tiny frog in a huge pond." A girl whose friendly overture had just been rebuffed said, "I feel like I have just had an arm amputated."

A third way to describe a feeling is to report what kind of action the feeling urges you to do. "I feel like hugging and hugging you.: "I'd like to slap you." "I wish I could walk off and leave you."

In addition, many figures of speech serve as descriptions of feeling. "I just swallowed a bushel of spring sunshine.

Describing your own feelings: You try to make clear what feelings you are experiencing by identifying them. The statement must (1) refer to "I", "me", or "my", and (2) specify some kind of feeling by name, simile, action urge, or other figure of speech.

The following examples show the relation between two kinds of expressions of feeling, (1) those that describe what the speaker is feeling, and (2) those that do not. Notice that expressions of feeling which describe the speaker's emotional state are more precise, less capable of misinterpretation, and, thus, convey more accurately what feelings are affecting the speaker.

EXPRESSING FEELING BY DESCRIBING YOUR EMOTIONAL STATE	EXPRESSING FEELING WITHOUT DESCRIBING YOUR EMOTIONAL STATE
"I feel embarrassed." "I feel pleased." "I feel annoyed."	Blushing and saying nothing.

EXPRESSING FEELING BY DESCRIBING	EXPRESSING FEELING WITHOUT
"I feel angry!" "I'm worried about this." "I feel hurt by what you said."	Suddenly becoming silent in midst of a conversation.
"I enjoy her sense of humor." "I respect her abilities and competence." "I love her but I feel I shouldn't say so."	"She's a wonderful person."
"I hurt too much to hear any more." "I feel angry at myself." "I'm angry with you."	"Shut up!!!"

Because emotional states express themselves simultaneously in words in actions, and in physiological changes, a person may convey contradictory messages about what he is feeling. For example, his actions (a smile or laugh) may contradict his words (that he is angry). The clearest emotional communication occurs when the speaker's description of what he is feeling matches and, thus, amplifies what is being conveyed by his actions and other non-verbal expressions of feeling.

The aim in describing your own feelings is to start a dialogue that will improve your relationship with the other. After all, others need know how you feel if they are to take your feelings into account. Negative feelings are indicator signals that something may be going wrong in a relationship with another person. To ignore negative feelings is like ignoring a warning light that indicates that an electrical circuit is overloaded. Negative feelings are a signal that the two of you need to check for misunderstanding and faulty communication.

After discussing how each of you sees the situation or your relationship, you may discover that your feelings resulted from false perception of the situation and of his motives. In this case, your feelings would probably change. However, the other may discover that his actions are arousing feelings in you that he wasn't aware of --- feelings that others beside you might experience in response to his behavior -- and he may change.

In short, describing your feelings should not be an effort to coerce the other into changing so that you won't feel as you do. Rather you report your inner state as just one more piece of information that is necessary if the two of you are to understand and improve your relationship.

PERCEPTION CHECK

You describe what you perceive to be the other's inner state in order to check whether you do understand what he feels. That is, you test to see whether you have decoded his expressions of feeling accurately. You transform his expressions of feeling into a tentative description of his feeling. A good perception check conveys this message, "I want to understand your feelings -- is this (making a description of his feeling) the way you feel?"

Examples:

I get the impression you are angry with me. Are you?" (NOTE: "Why are you so angry with me?'" This is mind reading, not perception checking).

"Am I right that you feel disappointed that nobody commented on your suggestion?"

"I'm not sure whether your expression means that my comment hurt your feelings, irritated you or confused you."

NOTE that a perception check (1) describes the other's feelings, and (2)) does not express disapproval or approval. It merely conveys, "This is how I understand your feelings. Am I accurate.

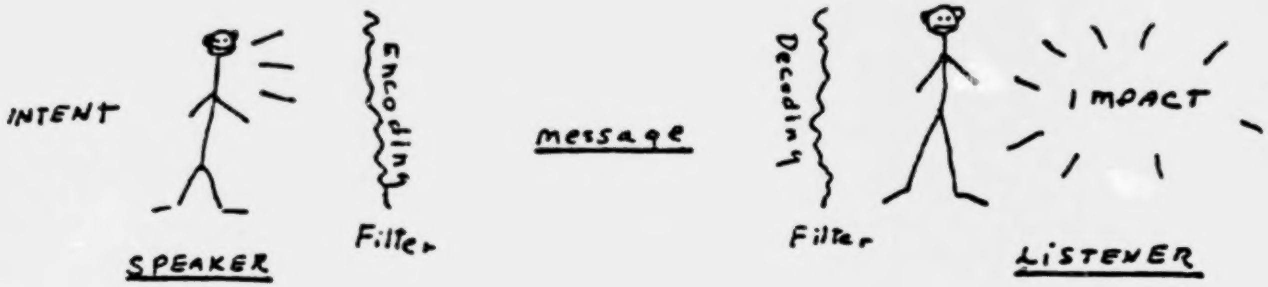
John L. Wallen
July, 1968

BASICS OF COMMUNICATION

Basics of Communication

You cannot not communicate.

Very simple way of thinking about communication is:



Good communicaton means that the speaker's intent is synonymous with the impact on the listener.

INTENT -- IMPACT

The speaker tries to clarify the intent of his message by stating clearly and precisely what he is thinking, feeling, or wanting. He does not assume the listener "knows" what is going on in his head. The good listener tries to make sure that the intent of the message is understood and does not try to guess or mind read what is in the speaker's mind.

FEEDBACK

Feedback is the only way to check out whether INTENT equalled IMPACT. The person impacted upon, the listener, gives feedback about the message to the speaker. Unfortunately, most of us live in a feedback vacuum and simply assume that clear communication took place. This assumption can lead to hurt feelings, confusion or a variety of other communication pitfalls.

MESSAGES

All messages have two components: a CONTENT component, which is the printed word and a FEELING component which is how the message is delivered. For example "You promise x that I would have the report done by Friday." The feeling component is delivered by both the choice of words and the non-verbal behavior of the speaker.

BASIC ELEMENTS IN PHYSICAL ATTENDING

SOLER: S - Face the other person SQUARELY

O - Adopt an OPEN posture

L - LEAN toward the other

E - Keep good EYE contact

R - Try to be "at home" or relatively RELAXED in this position.

Physical Attending means facing the other squarely, maintaining an open posture, maintaining good eye contact, leaning toward the other, and remaining relatively relaxed with this position.

Psychological Attending means:
1) Listening to verbal & non-verbal messages of others.
2) Listening to our own non-verbal and verbal messages (self awareness).

A Good Listener:
1) Hears a message
2) Reflects on this
3) Asks for clarification if necessary.

FIBER: F - FOLLOWING conversation

I - INTEREST, INTIMACY

B - BODY movement

E - EYE contact

R - RELAXATION

ACTIVE LISTENING

Learning relaxation skills and ways of changing our self-talk is a logical way to begin, as we are the ones who are in control of those processes (although they often feel out of control). On the other hand, active listening is an intervention which addresses our interaction with others.

Active listening, and subsequent assertiveness training, are two very effective ways of dealing with the stressors.

One of the authors was yelled at by an angry physician. She said to the physician, "You sound angry. Are you just angry at me?" The physician replied, "I'm angry at not having a piece of equipment I need. I'm not angry at you, but thanks for asking.

Thus we are introduced to one of the simplest, yet most effective tools for reducing stress --- active listening. It is almost too simple to be true. and, the effects of its use are multiple.

First of all, it is a defusing device: it defuses anger simply because of the acknowledgment from one person to another that yes, he is angry. Second, it clarifies where, in fact, that anger is directed. Is it a personal, vindictive anger? Or is someone mad about an inanimate object, and not actually towards another person, like the physician in the example above. Third, and probably most important when we are talking about stress reduction, active listening allows you to decide whether or not you want to "buy into" someone else's momentary craziness; it buys time, allowing you to conserve time and energy with opening statements that acknowledge someone else's anger, frustration, annoyances, whatever, but preserving your option of participating or not participating in those annoyances. Let's go back to the beginning and set the stage for all of this.

In any given situation, whether the situation is stressful; or not, there are three parts to the communication process. There is always (1) a sender of the message, (2) a receiver of the message and (3) the content of the material. The message can be either verbal or non-verbal.

When all three parts of the communication process are functioning smoothly, effective communication takes place, and there is little room for misunderstanding. However, if one or more of the three parts are not functioning correctly -- either the sender, receiver or message -- incomplete or inappropriate messages may be relayed, with a resulting increase in stress levels and misunderstanding. For example, if the sender of the message has had a bad day and is feeling thoroughly frustrated, that person might say "I can't stand it here any longer!" The receiver of the message, perhaps a co-worker who feels taken aback by the outburst, could take the exclamation personally and think "My gosh, what did I do? Is she angry with me, or just plain angry?"

Active listening is an excellent method of checking out those assumptions; it is a legitimate way of breaking the emotional chain - that could evolve with a reply of, "I can't stand it here either, and your frustration and outburst are really making me even more uptight." Such a reply could cloud or even mistakenly crystallize the content of the message "I can't stand it here" and leave room for highly emotional and highly stressful communication.

Let's suggest an Active Listening answer instead, "I can't stand it here any longer!" warrants the reply "you sound upset about your work" - a brief, simple reply that acknowledges the other person's feeling, gives the active listener a chance to hear more about how the person is actually feeling, and allows the listener the option of either continuing with the conversation or leaving it with a simple acknowledgment. To continue on, the active listening script in this case could run like this:

Sender: "I can't stand this place any more!"
Receiver: "You sound really upset about your work."
Sender: "You're darn right I'm upset. I get no feedback, either positive or negative about how I', doing and I don't feel appreciated.
Receiver: "Well I am sorry you're upset, but I wanted to check out with you to see if you were upset at me or simply at work.

The conversation could either continue from here into a problem-solving session for the sender, or it could terminate. But, what has taken place is at least a defusing of emotions -- both the sender's and the receiver's. The receiver has delayed responding with his feelings and thereby has had the opportunity to verify any underlying messages, feelings and emotions of the sender before developing a personal view of the situation and its effect on his (the receiver's) own behavior. The usual result of an active listening reply is that the sender cools down, and the situation is placed in a more rational and reasonable perspective, both for the sender and for the receiver.

RATIONALIZING: Adding your reasons for the other person feeling the way she does. For example:

Sender: "All I ever get to do is the scut work around here. I feel as though I'm xeroxing my life away."
Receiver (rationalizing) "Oh, come on now, it's just a really hot day, and you're just in a bad mood."

This answer may or may not be true, but it doesn't allow any verification of the original message and the original emotion of the message.

QUESTIONING: Questioning the motive or reasoning of the sender in his/her original message. For example:

Sender (muttering under his breath): "You know, you can't trust anyone around here without getting stabbed in the back."

Receiver (questioning): "Oh really, who are you talking about? Anyone I know?"

This reply allows the original message to either fester and get worse, or to get lost in a sea of gossip, without any resolution of the issue.

SUPPORTING: Now, this is a difficult one to avoid, because it is in most of our natures, particularly in the helping professions, to help and support one another. But once again, what we are proposing here is that you allow the sender to verbalize the message, then allow yourself to verify the content, and, most important, give yourself time to decide whether or not you want to or can help. Supporting is admirable, but in terms of stress reduction, namely your own, and in terms of being rational about the "myth of the perfect helping professional you may need to assess the situation with an active listening technique rather than being immediately supportive. For example:

Sender:	"I could die here, and no one would even notice."
Receiver: (supporting)	"Now, now it's o.k. It's all going to be better. I will help you.

This reply may not have acknowledged the content or emotion of the original statement and may get you involved in a situation you wished you had avoided.

DEFENDING: Defending occurs when the receiver backs up the apparent purpose of the message without further information, or on the other hand is defensive in response to the sender. For example:

Sender: (in a loud voice)	"I've been working on this report for the last three days, and now you send this other memo telling me I have to add this, delete that and change something else."
Receiver: (defensive)	"The memo is important. I wrote it, and I am the only one who knows the whole picture. No more discussion.."

This reply just leads to escalation of stress for both of you.

JUDGING: Making a judgement about the motive, personality or reasoning of the sender about her message. For example:

Sender:	"Well, I'm supposed to get up in front of the group with my presentation today. I've written and rewrittten my material, but I'm sure they won't like it. They'll probably laugh me off the podium.
Receiver:	"You shouldn't feel that way."

This answer is a sure way of telling the sender you're just not interested, and that you know how she should feel.

PARROTING: Parroting is simply and obnoxiously restating exactly what it was the other person said.

Sender: "Gee, this place is really disgusting."
Receiver: "Sounds like you think this place is really disgusting."

A reply such as this provides virtually no acknowledgment of the intent or reasoning behind the message.

Assuming then that rationalizing, questioning, supporting, defending, judging and parroting should be avoided, what do we propose? That a very simple active listening technique be employed as the first reply. The technique is simple and almost like filling in a blank. It is, in a sense, being a "mirror" to the speaker regarding what he has said (but without simply parroting).

The idea of active listening was first proposed by psychologist Carl Rogers. The format is simple:

"You sound ________________ about __________________________."

angry	this
upset	that
worried	the other thing

Let's go back to some of our examples, and try this technique.

Sender: "All I ever get to do is the scut work around here. I feel as though I'm xeroxing my life away."
Receiver: "You sound really frustrated about your work."

OR

Sender: "You know, you can't trust anyone around here without getting stabbed in the back."
Receiver: "You sound like you're not sure of what's really happening at work."

OR

Sender: "I could die here, and no one would even notice."
Receiver: "You sound really upset."

An easy way to remember the important elements in an active listening situation is to try to recall the characteristics of an exchange where you felt free to really talk about feelings and about the things that concerned you. Think about the characteristics of the social climate and of the person you were speaking with.
Some of the elements may include:

1. Understanding
2. Warmth and acceptance
3. Non-evaluation
4. Equality
5. Freedom
6. Faith in your ability to solve your problems.

The active listener is reflective and empathic, in order that the sender may feel accepted and understood. The active listener is objective and non-judgemental, to avoid clouding the issue with feelings of guilt and inferiority. By identifying the feelings being transmitted, the active listener is essentially telling the sender he is free to express his emotions. By clarifying the direct of these feelings, the active listener is promoting the problem-solving process, and the sender becomes more assured of his abilities to handle emotional situations.

Of course, any new technique such as active listening may require a change in the way you generally respond to a message. Like most behavioral change, it will probably require practice.

LISTEN

When I ask you to listen to me
and you start giving advice
you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me
and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way,
you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me
and you feel you have to do something to solve my problem,
you have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I asked, was that you listen
not talk or do -- just hear me.
Advice is cheap: 10 cents will get you both Dear Abby and
Billy Graham in the same newspaper.
And I can do for myself; I'm not helpless.
Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can and need to do
for myself, you contribute to my fear and weakness.

But, when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel,
no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince
you and can get about the business of understanding what's
behind this irrational feeling.
And when that's clear, the answers are obvious and I
don't need advice.
Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's
behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometime, for some people
because God is mute, and he doesn't give advice or
try to fix things. "They" just listen and let you
work it out for yourself.

So, please listen and just hear me. And, if you want to
talk, wait a minute for your turn; and I'll listen to you.

Anonymous

MODULE #4 -- HOMEWORK

- Beliefs that have blocked for you to be assertive!
  Make a plan to change (if you want to change the resolving behaviors).

Each day in the next week repeat the statement:
-"I have the right to . . . " and recall the message you were given in the group.

Index of Materials Included

Module # 5 MYTHS & CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS

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Taken from: "Assertion Training" by Cotler & Guerra.

Four non-assertive myths, patterns of interacting with others that are common in this culture and which we believe are incompatible with our goals of teaching and promoting more open, honest, assertive relationships among people. We call these non-assertive response patterns "myths" because seldom, if ever, do individuals test the validity of the presupposed negative effects that the myths say will happen in a relationship. Secondly, these response styles have become so ingrained that, without our being fully aware of their influence, they are perpetuated and taught to others as being correct, important, and dangerous to act in ways not prescribed by the myths. Essentially, we feel that each of the four myths tends to place an individual in a one-down position where he will get fewer of his needs met in interpersonal relationships. In presenting these myths, our goals are to identify and define the non-assertive response styles or myths, describe specific reasons why we believe the myths promote feeling of disatisfacation, and discuss assertion training procedures that can be utilized to dispel and counteract each of the myths presented here.

MYTH OF MODESTY

The first of our myths we have labeled the myth of modesty. An individual who subscribes to this myth finds it extremely difficult to praise himself or accept a compliment from someone else without refuting or demeaning the compliment. When taken to extreme, the individual is so tied into the belief system that "it is good to be modest at any cost" that he is not only unable to verbally accept compliment or give self praise, but he also begins to deny the existence of any positive personal attributes. Such individuals are frequently found to be very self-critical, have a poor self-image, and they are often depressed.

An unfortunate result of this response style is that the individual tunes out or denies his positive attributes and begins to pay increasingly more attention to faults and criticism which just adds to the poor self-image and depression. These individuals often deny or feel uncomfortable when someone compliments them and then accept as "truth" any criticism that is directed their way. All of us have some faults and will be subject to criticism from others at one time or another. However, if we can also accept and feel that we have positive qualities which are worthy of praise, then it will be much easier to balance and put the criticisms in their proper perspective.

When working with compliment anxious individuals, our first goal is to help them recognize and acknowledge that they have some positive strengths and interests, even if these strengths and interests seem trivial or unrelated to assertive behavior (e.g, buying their own clothes, liking animals, enjoying science fiction stories).

Secondly, we encourage them to share these strengths and interest with others while constantly emphasizing that through this sharing of positive strengths and interests, rather than weaknesses and failures, they are much more likely to establish more meaningful and enjoyable relationships. This is not to imply that we encourage these individuals to list all of their positive attributes to everyone they meet or to hold themselves up to another person so that the other person feels put down. However, selectively giving information about one's interests and strengths to others, especially when you do not know the other person very well, can serve to strengthen rather than weaken the relationship. An individual who can share some personal experiences, strengths, accomplishments, or joys, as well as elicit and actively listen to the personal experiences of others, is in a much better position than the individual who always sits quietly by and says nothing or only comments about the hardships and failures in his life. As a third stage, we teach the individual how to accept a compliment given to him without quickly discarding the compliment or making the other person feel that he had bad taste in giving the compliment in the first place.

Compliments and praise, whether given to oneself or by someone else, are some of the treasures in life which can make our existence and our relationships more enjoyable and meaningful. These "treasures" are needlessly lost when one discards them in order to maintain a cloak of modesty.

MYTH OF THE GOOD FRIEND

A second common myth that we believe greatly interferes with closer interpersonal relationships and more satisfying communications is the myth of the good friend. This myth assumes that anyone who is a good friend, or spouse, or relative, or neighbor, or boss, or sales person, should be able to anticipate our needs, our feelings, our thoughts, and give us what we would like to have without our clearly saying what those needs are. How many times have you heard yourself or someone else say, "If he really was a friend, he would have known that I do not like ... " or "If she really loved me, she would ..."? We often expect others to be able to accurately read our thoughts and feelings and then respond accordingly. Unfortunately, most people are not very good at this. In that, you are the only person who really knows what is going on inside your head or your gut at any given moment in time, it becomes your responsibility to let others know what you are feeling and thinking. For if you do not verbally and specifically communicate what you want, expect, resent, appreciate, or feel hurt by, the other person may never respond in a manner that satisfies you. as a result, resentment may begin to grow on your part until you either "blow up" at the individual or begin to avoid him more and more.

For example, a friend may constantly ask you to watch her children for the afternoon or to drive her across town because she does not like to drive on the freeways. You may feel this is an imposition on your time, and you may, in fact, give some indirect communication of this feeling through you response (e.g., "Well, I guess that will be all right if there is no one else for you to ask," or "I was planning on going out to lunch that day with my cousin, but I guess I could help you out"). However, if you do not clearly state your objections or your other plans, the individual may conclude that it is not an imposition of your time at all; consequently, requests such as this may occur over and over again. Likewise, if you want to take a Saturday morning off to go shopping while your spouse watches the kids, it is your responsibility to tell your spouse this and not to expect he will see that you are tired of watching the kids and need some time for yourself.

Those who subscribe to the myth of the good friends usually behave according to its dictates in many levels of their relationships. They typically do not state clearly what they want, and consequently, they feel they are being abused or taken advantage of by others. If you were ever at a restaurant where the food was served cold and found yourself angry and complaining under your breath, you may have been subscribing to the myth of the good friend. The assumption here is that if it were a "good" waiter or waitress, the person would know that the food was served improperly. If you have ever secretly wished that your spouse or lover remember your birthday, you may be buying into the good friend myth. In this case, a "good" spouse or lover would know how important this date is to you and would respond accordingly. However, it is our belief that in such cases it is your responsibility to make it clear to the other person just what you are feeling and what you would like the individual to do in that situation.

Part of the myth, and a common erroneous assumption is that the values you hold to be important must be held in equal importance by others. This is not always the case. For example, one of the authors has typically been unconcerned about being places on time unless it is clearly understood that prompt attendance is important to that situation. However, the other author typically arrives on time to most situations as a matter of habit and assumes that when a business or social date is made, he and the others will consider the time commitment as an important aspect of the date. Only after some open communciations were given did we rationalize that each of us had a different value and definition of promptness. Equally as important, neither of us was "wrong" in terms of our actions based upon our individual belief systems and values.

We believe that individuals who frequently employ a response style consistent with that of the myth of the good friend are, at least in one sense, non-assertive. As a result of this non-assertive behavior, the individual often attempts to rationalize and project the responsibility of communication to other people in his life. Often these individuals complain that they are just not able to find people who understand them. They spend a good part of their lives with unfulfilled wants and needs searching for "the perfect person."

This fantasized "perfect person" turns out to be someone who is able to anticipate and provide for their needs without words or communications. We feel that there is no such "perfect person" and that the open and honest communications of our needs is crucial in all relationships. It is true that as a relationship continues to develop, the other person will be able to accurately anticipate or predict your feelings and wants on some occasions. However, in most cases, this only occurs after you have expressed personal feeling and wants on several occasions in the past.

At times members in our groups have stated that it would do no good to be assertive, because nothing they could do or say would make the other person change. That is actually a true statement. There may not be anything a person can do or say that will make the other person change. However, if changes were never possible, then there would be no real purpose for doing psychotherapy, counseling, or training in the first place. Our contention is that one of the ways people change is through clear feedback, and that individuals in healthy relationships will change for each other when there is understanding and respect for each other's needs.

Unfortunately, there are those individuals in search of the "perfect person," who find it difficult to accept change from the other person even when it does occur. When there is a change following an assertive response, these individuals find it unacceptable because the other person did not give them what they wanted without being told and, by being told, it now loses its value. Have you ever heard someone else remark, "If I tell him my birthday is important to me and he is nice to me on that day, it is only because I asked him and not because he really cared for me"? These individuals are placing themselves in a position where they cannot possibly win. Often they fail to ask for their needs to be satisfied, thereby feeling hurt and angry. If they do ask and their request are met, they still are not satisfied. We believe that only when one lets others know what his wants and feelings are and accepts the possibility that it is not the "duty" of the other person to know and respond accordingly without this feedback, will the individual be able to avoid the detrimental results of the myth of the good friend.

MYTH OF ANXIETY

The third non-assertive myth is the myth of anxiety, Essentially, people who attempt to live their lives within this myth are phobic of their own anxiety and phobic of revealing that they are anxious in interpersonal situations. They fear others noticing their anxiety because they believe that to be anxious shows others that there is something terribly wrong with them or that they are "weak" individuals. The stereotype of the Great American Male" who is unafraid and unaffected by anything in his environment is the tragic "hero" of the myth of anxiety. Men who subscribe to this myth often feel prevented from expressing their emotions when they are anxious. An example of such a person is a client who had an intense fear of flying.

Unfortunately, he was unable to avoid flying since his job required him to travel over long distances within very short periods of time. Consistent with the myth, he saw himself as being unable to express his fear, ask for some help, or ask for a transfer to another position. He felt that to do any of these would place him in the position of being seen as a coward or sissy by his fellow employees. He finally sought professional help after tolerating his high anxiety for over fifteen years. During these fifteen years, he had not shared this fear with anyone but his wife. He was afraid to tell his grown children, relatives, friends, employer, or fellow employees that he was anxious. He was the tragic "hero" in the myth of anxiety since he was unable for years to assert himself enough to ask others for help with his problem.

One of the detrimental effects of this myth is that individuals who are suffering from its influence often spend a great deal of energy trying to conceal their anxiety from others. However, in many cases, this concern to "look good" actually increases the anxiety level. For example, giving a talk before a large group of people or before a group of critical peers can be a very anxiety producing task for many individuals. As the individual begins to speak, he may be aware of anxiety symptoms such as a cracking voice, sweaty palms, or trembling hands. At this point he can engage in some activity to counteract the anxiety such as relaxation. He can also acknowledge his tension to the audience, thereby reducing much of the energy and tension expended in trying to look calm and collected. If the former relaxation procedure does not work and the latter self-disclosure procedure is used, the person often reports an immediate release of tension and anxiety. However, if the person tries to hide this anxiety by powering through it, he often becomes increasingly more sensitive to each additional anxiety cue, and , as a result, becomes increasingly more anxious in the situation.

Everyone experiences anxiety at times, and anxiety can be a normal emotional response in some situations. At other times, however, this anxiety response may be irrational, unadaptive or inappropriate to the situation of hand, and, in such instances, the individual may wish to seek some help for this phobia. However, even if the anxiety response is irrational, unadaptive or inappropriate, we find no good reason for being ashamed of its existence or trying to keep it locked up inside of us for fear of being seen as weak or inadequate.

In the course of assertion training,those individuals with the myth of anxiety are encouraged to begin sharing their feeling of tension when they begin to occur. By sharing these feelings in a frequent and ongoing manner, we desensitize the individual to the fear of having and trying to hide anxiety. When this is accomplished, the person can then begin to deal with the feared stimulus itself in a more appropriate and effective manner.

MYTH OF OBLIGATION

The fourth myth that we would like to identify and dispel is the myth of obligation. This myth can be divided into two parts. The first part assumes that if a person asks a friend for a favor, in order for the friendship to continue, the friend is obligated to grant the request. Essentially, there appears to be little or no possibility for a refusal in a friendship according to this myth. Individuals who never seem to say "NO" are often seen as happy-go-lucky people who are always smiling and are always ready to help a friend. Others may frequently call on them for favors since they never refuse and never express that they are feeling imposed upon. Our experience has been that these individuals often do feel imposed upon, and they feel quite resentful that others keep asking them for favors. However, they do not assert themselves and refuse any requests, for they fear that they will hurt their friends' feelings and, consequently, their friends will not like them anymore.

The second part of the myth of obligation equates making a request of someone with an imposition. The individual feels that the other person would not be able to refuse the request, so rather than imposing on the person and possibly making him angry and resentful, the request is not made in the first place. As a result, the individual who avoids making requests may have many unfulfilled needs.

A relationship between two people acting consistently within the myth of obligation is one in which:

Jack doesn't say no to Jill
because she will resent him,
so he resents her.

Jill doesn't say no to Jack
because he will resent her,
so she resents him.

Jack doesn't ask Jill
because she will resent him,
so he resent her.

Jill doesn't ask Jack
because he will resent her,
so she resents him.

Jack and Jill aren't talking anymore
They resent each other too much.

CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS

1. Ask open-ended questions - first degree of intimacy - who, what, when, where, ("information" questions), second degree of intimacy - why, how (more threatening questions to respond to) ("explanation" questions).
2. Attending to free information in other persons statements.
3. Giving self-disclosure.
4. Changing topic - emphasize.
5. Breaking into on-going conversations.
   - enter at natural pause or ask relevant question.
6. Silence is OK
   -The odds are the other person feels the same way as you.
7. Telling stories.
   -important that the story have a beginning, middle and end.
   -important also to be to the point.
8. Terminating conversations.

CONVERSATION SKILLS AND OTHER RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

Taken from "Assertion Training" by Cotler and Guerra.

SEQUENCE OF PRACTICE

The manner in which we present specific assertive procedures varies from time to time; however, one sequence has generally appeared to be very effective for us (this sequence can be used for individual as well as group assertion training). Given that we have a specific skill in mind which we believe is appropriate to the problem area described by people, especially at a party or other social situation"), we begin by setting up the situation and asking the client to visualize how he would typically respond (the client is also asked to rate his SUDS as he visualizes the scene). The next step is to describe some of the basic components of the skill we want to work on (e.g., asking open-ended question). After the demonstration has been carried out and briefly discussed, the client is once again asked to visualize the same situation, keeping track of his SUDS and trying to utilize as many of the modeled components as possible. When this has been completed, the client then role-plays the procedure while being coached. It is very important that this behavioral rehearsal be actively coached and carried out in such a way that the client receives frequent support and feedback. It is also important that the behavioral rehearsal is carried out in such a manner that the situation itself and the other actors in the role-playing situation do not create high levels of anxiety for the client.

After the client has been coached through this demonstration, the group is often divided into triads with one individual taking the role of the assertor, one person acting as a coach, and third person assuming the recipient or protagonist) role. The participants then role-play the situation until each person has had the opportunity to be the assertor, the coach, and the recipient. During this time the therapists circulate around the room assisting in the triads when appropriate. This latter step allows for a great deal of group interaction and practice to occur simultaneously, and in addition to the coaching role, it allows individuals to be on the "receiving" as well as on the "giving" end of the assertive responses. This can be very helpful in that individuals are often more willing to respond assertively after they have experienced how it feels to be the recipient of an assertive interaction. This role-playing may be repeated several times if necessary until individuals are able to respond assertively and maintain a low SUDS. However, triad practice should only be used after most, if not all, of the group member can assume the roles of coach and recipient with a certain degree of proficiency and with tolerable levels of anxiety. As a final step, the group practice is discussed, and an attempt is made to correct or respond to any problems or difficulties which may have occurred.

The preceding sequence is not used every time a new procedure is introduced; however, we have utilized it quite frequently, and we have found it to be very effective in introducing some of the various procedures we wish to present for our clients to observe and experience.

CONVERSATION SKILLS

There are a number of component behaviors to establishing, maintaining, and terminating conversations. There are also a number of additional skills which can serve to enhance a new or well-established relationship between two or more individuals. In reality, these different behaviors can overlap and intertwine with one another during the course of any interaction. However, for training and writing purposes, we have separated these components into conversation skills and additional relationship skills.

An individual possessing conversational skills is often regarded as being "sociable," "fun," "friendly," and, in some cases, even "charismatic." As a result, this individual is more likely to have a greater number of acquaintances and friends than a person lacking in the ability to initiate and sustain conversations. In most cases, before you are able to a make a friend, you must first talk to the person and get to know him. Conversely, the "stranger" must learn something about you.

Many individuals who have been in our assertion groups report the feeling that they have no effect in a dialogue. They describe themselves as being "leaves in the wind," blown about at the mercy of the stranger with whom they are attempting to talk. If the stranger is easy to talk to, they may be able to keep a conversation going. However, if the stranger is not eager or skillful in talking with them, they walk away feeling anxious and frustrated. Other individuals in our groups report that they are able to meet new people only under certain ritualistic circumstances, such as being introduced by a mutual friend two or three consecutive times, being in a personally comfortable setting, talking about certain non-controversial subjects, or after taking four drinks. Certainly these latter individuals are better off than having no way of meeting other people, but the probability of their requirements occurring on a regular basis is rather slim. These individuals, too, feel the lack of personal power to change the course of a dull or anxious encounter into an enjoyable meeting and conversation.

We feel that being able to comfortably talk with others is a skill that can be extremely important for these individuals who have relegated themselves to the roles of social wallflowers and isolates. With the proper skills and moderately low anxiety, such people can increase the probability of initiating friendships and enhancing relationships in a variety of social situations. These skills are applicable when ever people meet people. Consider the number of times you encounter a stranger in the course of a day. Whether it is a man meets woman scenario, student meet professor, or an interaction involving a grocery clerk, landlord, policeman, doctor, or lawyer, the ability to talk to people in order to express what you are feeling and thinking can potentially increase your pleasure and welfare in life.

Before we describe some behaviorally defined components of an interaction, there is an important point to consider. Although some of the following skills will increase the probability of starting maintaining a conversation with someone, they will not insure an extended dialogue or guarantee a resulting friendship. If the person you are attempting to talk with does not want to participate, a conversation will probably not occur. Similarly if the "stranger" and you cannot find some mutual interest, a friendship will probably not develop. Therefore, a risk is taken by a person attempting to form a relationship with someone else. This risk is one of rejection or the possible fear of rejection. Of course, the risk of being alone and isolated is also present if no socialization attempts are made. This risk must be attended to by all assertion trainers working with clients who are developing interaction skills. Therefore, developing reasonable and manageable homework assignments designed to maximize the chances for success in this are of utmost importance.

In working with individual who show a deficit in being able to establish and maintain enjoyable conversations, we typically break down the process of a conversation into the following observable components which we have labeled conversation skills.

SKILL ONE: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

In order to find out information about another individual, asking questions is often necessary. However, there are at least two different kinds of questions you can ask-the open-ended question and the close-ended question. A close-ended question is one that can be answered with a simple one-word answer or grunt: "Do you come to the beach here often?" "Do you like that book?" "Is this the first time you have been to one of Melvin's parties?" "Do you like the weather when it is windly like this?" Close-ended questions such as these often elicit a "Yes," "No," or "Uh-huh" response. As a result, if the individual does not elaborate on his "Yes," "No," or "Uh-huh" response, you will acquire only a minimal amount of information about him. Also, if close-ended questions are asked one after another, the recipient of these questions may begin to feel as if he were being interrogated. Consequently, he may begin to back off from the interaction. One or two of these close-ended questions may be appropriate at the beginning of a conversation in order to get the conversation started. However, if a number of questions are going to be asked, we recommend the use of an open-ended question whenever possible.

An open-ended question is one that cannot easily be answered by a monosyllabic reply: "What is it about this beach that you enjoy? or "How do you feel about the movement for equal rights to women in our society?" If you received a "Yes" or "No" reply from these questions, you probably think that the person was a bit odd (or did not want to talk with you in the first place). Open-ended questions are usually much more difficult to answer with a simple, short reply; consequently, you are more likely to gain additional information about the individual when asking these open-ended questions. Actually, there are two categories of open-ended questions The first category includes those questions that begin with the words or ideas of who, what, when or where: "Who do you recommend I go to in order to get my car fixed?" "What is it about sailing that is so exciting?" "When and where is the fishing nest around here?" Where is the bathroom?" The second type of open-ended question begins with how or why, such as "How did you get into that business in the first place?" or "Why do you think I am mad at you?" How and why questions tend to elicit detailed explanations from the individual; consequently they give the individual an opportunity to tell you a great deal about himself. As such, they can be the most useful type of questions in leading to a comfortable interaction between two or more individuals.

SKILL TWO: ATTENDING TO FREE INFORMATION

Free information is information given by another individual which goes beyond the question being asked or is given without being solicited. If, for example, you asked, "How do you like this windy weather we have been having?" and the other person replied by saying, "I'd like it a lot better if I was out sailing on my boat rather than painting my house this weekend," you have obtained four bits of free information. The person likes to sail and has a sailboat, he owns a house, and is presently painting his house. The free information that is given to you can be on a superficial level: "I don't like to paint." It can also be of a more personal nature: "Since my recent divorce, doing housework has really become depressing." After receiving some free information depends upon your personal interest and your interests in knowing more about the other person.

For example, once while we were demonstrating conversation skills in front of a large group using a volunteer from the audience, a question was asked regarding the volunter's interests. In answering the question, the individual commented that she had been recently divorced and had two small children at home. The workshop leader purposely avoided any conversation about her divorce and, instead, began talking about the children. In discussing the demonstration afterwards, the workshop leader stated that he had avoided the topic of divorce because he felt it would have been uncomfortable for the participant to talk about this in front of the larger group. However, the participant in the demonstration stated that she would not have been uncomfortable at all with the subject and, in fact, she felt free to talk about it. Although it was well within the leader's rights to avoid the divorce topic, and in this situation it did not seem to hamper the conversation, he forgot that free information is usually given willingly and, as such, it can be taken as an invitation to pursue that topic.

This does not mean that all free information needs to be discussed. In fact, some individuals may repeatedly volunteer free information that you do not want to touch with a ten foot pole: "Do you want to hear about my fifth sexual conquest of the week?" On the other hand, one of the basic skills in good conversations is at least listening for the free information given by the other person. If the information is interesting, then talk about it or store it in the back of your mind so that you can come back to it later. If the free information is not of interest to you, then skip it and listen for some additional free information which is more interesting to you. It is well to remember that if you pursue a topic in which you are totally uninterested or with which you feel extremely uncomfortable, there is a greater likelihood of a dead-end conversation, boredom, or high anxiety.

SKILL THREE: GIVING SELF-DISCLOSURE

Self-disclosure is free information that you give about yourself during the course of a conversation. Consider the following interaction between Milford (M) and Wetley (W). As the reader, put yourself in Wetley's position, and see how you feel about Milford.

Scene: Waiting for a bus somewhere in Los Angeles

M: Hi, are you waiting for the bus to San Diego?

W: Yes, why?

M: I was just wondering if you knew if the bus usually runs on time.

W: Well, I travel on this bus at least once or twice a week, and it is usually late (Free information as to how often he uses that bus) I sure hope it's on time today because I have an important business appointment in san Diego at 3:00 p.m. (More information)

M: (Responding to some of the free information) What business are you in that makes you travel to San Diego so often.

W: I'm a traveling horseshoe salesman for Sears. (Free information as to what he does and for whom he works)
M: Huh! What exactly do you do?
W: Well, I sell primarily to large farms and to distributors in my region. I travel a lot since there aren't many horses around here (Free information)
M: Do you like it?
W: It's a living. I don't like leaving my family so much, and I hate horses. (Two more pieces of free information)
M: (Deciding to stay with the topic of horseshoes rather than following up on Wetley's family or dislike of horses) Say, how is the recession affecting the sales of horseshoes?

The conversation could continue like this until the bus arrived. How did you feel about Milford by the end? Milford has managed to start a conversation, ask several open-ended questions, and is following his free information leads well. However, one knows very little about Milford because he did not share any free information about himself which would have given the "shoe salesman" an opportunity to know him better. Actually, all you really know about Milford is that he is talking to Wetley and is probably on his way to San Diego.

If, on the other hand, Milford had given some self disclosure, then the conversation may have been quite different. Both parties could have learned about each other and shared in the mutual exchange of information.

M: How is the recession affecting the horseshoe buying?
W: It doesn't affect it very much at all. Horses always need shoes, and sales are actually up since people are buying more horses lately. Actually, I am making more money now than I have for the past four years (Free information)
M: No kidding (Here comes Milford's self disclosure) Maybe I should change professions. I'm a psychologist and our business is way down lately.
W: Gee, I have a cousin back East who is a psychologist and I just assumed that his business would increase with times like this (Free information)
M: Well maybe things back east are different, but all I know is that, as a psychologist in a private practice business is way off. (Free information)
W: What are you going to do about it?
M: Write a book about how to start conversations with strangers.

The second half of the conversation included some free information from both parties and was, in our opinion, more equitable and enjoyable interchange.

In order to get more information from the other people, you must be willing and able to give some information about yourself. To what degree the conversation stays on a superficial level or moves to a more personal level depends on the type of information that is mutually shared. Typically, conversations between individuals who do not know one another very well will move from a superficial to a more personal level, assuming that both individuals contribute increasingly greater amounts of personal information. We suggest that the information disclosed be gradually increased to intimacy if you are trying to move from a superficial relationship to a more intimate relationship. On each new level of intimacy disclosed, it is wise to pause and take the other individual's response into account. If he is receptive and responds similarly, then you may want to disclose more intimate information. It is unlikely that a comfortable conversation will last very long if one individual is relating personal information - "My marriage sure is rotten" - and the other individual is responding on a superficial level - "Yeah, I have an automobile that is rotten." In such situations, one of the individuals needs to adjust his level of communication or the interaction will usually terminate. Likewise, if one individual comes on with some very personal information or questions at the very beginning of a conversation, the other individual may not be prepared for this, and may, consequently, try to back away from the interaction, as in the following scene between Otis (O) and Zola (Z).

Scene: After the first day of class at a local university,

O: Hi, my name is Otis. All during the class I was sitting across the room noticing how attractive you looked. (Self-disclosure and compliment.) Since this is the first day of class and because I feel uncomfortable until I get to know a few people, I wanted to come over and introduce myself. (Self disclosure).

Z: A thank you very much for the compliment, Otis. I know very few people in this room too. My name is Zola. (Self disclosure).

O: Say, Zola. My apartment is just around the block from the university. How about coming over to my place tonight? We can smoke some pot and listen to records while try out my new water bed (Self-disclosure, free information)

Z: Thank for the invitation - but no thanks. I want to go to the library now. Goodbye.

In the above interaction, it is possible that Zola was attracted to Otis and would have liked to know him better. However, by Otis coming on so strong and so quickly, this particular relationship may never have the opportunity to develop. Therefore, in giving and receiving self-disclosures and asking questions, it is important to balance what is said with what is received. As a rule of thumb in giving self-disclosures, we suggest that a person give about as much free information as he receives in a conversation. If too little free information is given, the other individual will begin to feel as if he were being interrogated. On the other hand, if too much free information is provided without giving the other individual the opportunity to respond, the conversation may become too one-sided..

SKILL FOUR: CHANGING TOPICS

Individuals will often terminate a conversation prematurely when they run out of questions to ask or when the conversation begins to focus on an area in which they are not interested. Most initial conversations, especially those between two strangers, take awhile to get started. Consequently, before a common topic of interest is found, there may be several silences and several periods where topics are briefly picked up and then dropped. Just knowing that this is a common occurrence helps to alleviate much of this problem. It is also important to teach people that they have some control over the direction the conversation takes, especially if only two people are involved in the conversation. If they are not satisfied with the current topic of conversation, asking another open-ended question, following up on some free information that has been stored away, making a self-disclosure statement regarding another topic, or simply stating, "I am really interested in hearing more about ... " will often serve to move the topic of conversation to another area which is more satisfying or interesting for the individual, as in the following interaction between Joan (J) and Bill (B).

Scene an informal house party,

J: Hi, Bill. What have you been doing lately?

B: Well, during the summer I do a lot of ocean fishing. Just last week I went ocean fishing about 100 miles south of here. Unfortunately, I was sick during the first half of the trip and I didn't catch any fish; however, after I was feeling better, I had a nice time.

NOTE: In this last sentence, Bill has given three bits of free information about his trip.

J: I went ocean fishing once when I was younger, but I really did not enjoy it what with the rough water and the smell of engine fumes. What do you find enjoyable about fishing - especially since you were sick and didn't catch any fish?

B: Well, I don't normally get sick, and very often I do catch some fish. However, more than anything, it gives me a chance to relax and get away from work.

J: I can certainly understand your desire to get away and relax, although it is hard for me to think of ocean fishing as a way to do this. I would much rather backpack into the mountains where it is quiet and peaceful.

B: Gee, I didn't know that you were into backpacking. That is one of my avid interests too. Where have you done some backpacking?

NOTE: At this point, Joan has been able to direct the conversation away from ocean fishing which, for her, was not very appealing as a topic of mutual interest.

SKILL FIVE: BREAKING INTO ONGOING CONVERSATIONS

Another difficulty that is frequently reported involves becoming a part of an ongoing conversation. If the other individuals are open to having another person join in, their body posture and eye contact will often convey this: They will look your way, give you eye contact, and they may realign their bodies so that they are facing you. If this seems to be the case, then it is a matter of being able to stand by, listen to the context of the conversation, and then join in with some appropriate statement of self-disclosure, opinion, interest or free information when appropriate.

Scene: Joan and Bill still talking together at the informal house party,

J: Most of my backpacking has been in the Yosemite area; however, I have also done some hiking through Colorado and Oregon.

B: I haven't been to Colorado' however, I was born in Oregon, and I did a lot of backpacking there when I was younger.

JIM: (Who has walked up to this conversation and has stood listening for awhile waiting for an opening to enter the conversation) I didn't know you were from Oregon. I spent one whole summer there a few years ago doing some graduate work. Boy, that part of the country sure is great if you like the outdoors. When I was there, I think I spent more time in the woods than I did in the classroom.

In group we often practice this skill by having one client serve as the coach while two people practice their conversation skills. We then ask the coach to join in and become an actual member of the ongoing conversation. After this process has gone on for several moments, we have individuals form new groups, change roles, and start the whole process over from the beginning. At a later time, in order to approximate the "real world" more, we may have the third person walk up to a conversation that has been going on for a few moments. Even though the third person did not hear the start of the conversation, he tries to become a participating member of this small group. In observing these transitions, we pay close attention to how the individual introduces himself, what information is picked up on, what self-disclosures are made, the timing of the information, and what non-verbal cues are given.

SKILL SIX: SILENCES (the pregnant pause phobia)

Have you ever become aware of the periods of silence that occur in the course of a conversation? These periods do occur and are quite normal. Sometimes this silence can be uncomfortable, and, at other times, it can feel quite natural. Some individuals, especially those who are inexperienced in conversational skills, are phobic of pauses or silences in a conversation. Thee individuals feel that they should fill every moment of the conversation with words. They irrationally see silence as a :pregnant pause" that will give birth to personal disaster if they cannot end it immediately. However, almost all conversations, especially those between individuals who are getting to know one another better, have periods of silence. Consequently, giving the individual some relaxation skills and some other things to think about during these silent periods can be extremely useful.

SKILL SEVEN: TELLING STORIES

As the individual becomes more comfortable in talking with others, he will begin to talk in longer sentences and may relate some stories, experiences, or jokes. However, in relating these, it is important that each have a beginning, a middle, and especially an end. Some potentially very good stories seem to go on forever. Other stories seem to start from nowhere. Consequently, in relating a personal experience or in telling a story or joke, we encourage the individual to identify in some way a beginning and an end to what he is talking about: "That reminds me of the time I was in Chicago and ....." "and that is how I feel about the situation now."

SKILL EIGHT: NONVERBAL CUES

In addition to the verbal content skills, it is important to practice nonverbal conversation skills as well. For example, maintaining appropriate eye contact during the conversation rather than looking out the window or just staring at the other person is important. Other variables such as body space and posture, smiling and head-nodding, animation, voice characteristics, and so forth are also important additions to a smooth-flowing conversation. As such, each of these variables may be worked on separately or as a part of the total procedure in developing more interesting and effective interactions.

SKILL NINE: TERMINATING CONVERSATIONS

Simultaneous to teaching the individual how to start a conversation, we also train the individual how to terminate a conversation. Can you recall situations where you felt "cornered" by someone talking to you, and you used some excuse such as "I have to go to the bathroom" or "Oh, I forgot to make a phone call" in order to stop the interaction? Many clients do report situations such as this, and, as a result, they are anxious about entering any conversation where they may later feel trapped or imposed upon. Consequently, before we send them into the "real world," we give them some practice with things to say and do in order to terminate a conversation comfortably.

Things to say may involve some "canned" types of verbal responses which may be given at the end of a conversation: "I really have enjoyed talking with you" or "I see someone here whom I have not spoken with for a long time; I would like to continue our conversation later if you are free then." Other solutions may involve a change in verbal content-less self-disclosure and fewer open-ended question as well as some non-verbal cues such as a decrease in eye contact and head-nodding or an increase in body distance from the other person.

It often requires a considerable amount of practice before conversational skills can be carried out successfully. It is also necessary for individuals to experience low level of anxiety during conversations so that they can hear, process, and respond to the information given. For these reasons, the first attempts at starting and maintaining conversations are confined to role-playing situations within the assertion group. The group serves as a safe haven for this practice since social failure experiences are minimized.

A more advanced assignment would be to ask some open-ended questions or begin a conversation in a situation that is time-limited (e.g., on an elevator, waiting in line in a grocery store, in the service station while you are getting gas). Gradually, the situations can be structured so that the individual is engaging in longer conversations where the potential for more involved or intimate relationships is enhanced, for instance, at a party, talking with someone at work or at a vacation resort. As with most of the behaviors in assertion training, the level and pace of these assignments depends upon the individual's anxiety level and existing skills.

ADDITIONAL RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

SKILL TEN: SELF PRAISE

It is extremely important that the individual be able to recognize his strengths, interests, and opinions. Remember the exercise where we asked you to visualize describing four positive qualities about yourself to someone else? Were you able to do this without experiencing high levels of anxiety? If not, you may experience some difficulty in talking and sharing with others. Far too often, people are able to recognize and share their weaknesses and shortcomings rather than their strengths and interests. We try to reverse this process in assertion training. That is, during our conversation practice within and outside of the group, we encourage individuals to share information about their hobbies, interests, strengths, and opinions.

With a little bit of maneuvering, a person should be able to work almost any topic of enjoyable personal interest into a conversation. For example, a few years ago one of the authors spent ten days going down the Colorado River in a rubber raft.

Upon returning home, he was so excited about this trip that he worked it into almost every new conversation he entered: "Sherwin, how about going out to lunch?" Sounds great, I need to gain some of the weight back I lost on my Colorado River expedition."

Positive free information and self-disclosure can be given in a variety of ways. In our previous examples, much of the free information and self-disclosure can as the result of being asked a question. However, this information can also be given in the process of asking others questions. For example, instead of just saying, "Is this the first time you have been to one of Marvin's parties? you could say, "I have been to several of Marvin's parties and have never seen you before. Is this the first time you have been here? "Or instead of "Where do you recommend I go to have my car fixed?: you could say, "I have this Porsche which I really enjoy, but it is always in need of a tune-up. Do you know of someone who does good tune up work on sports cars?" In both of these examples, there is an extra bit of free information which the other person may choose to follow up on then or at some time in the future.

In supporting statement of positive self-disclosure and praise, we are not attempting to reinforce individuals who talk only about themselves and pay no attention to the needs, interest, and positive qualities of others. However, we are deliberately trying to reinforce clients to recognize that they do possess and can acquire some satisfying and self-fulfilling life experiences. We also encourage them to share these experiences, beliefs, and feelings with others as an alternative to remaining anxious and socially isolated.

SKILL ELEVEN: GIVING AND RECEIVING COMPLIMENTS

At this time, we would like to introduce Jack and Jill. Jill, by the way, is a compliment phobic individual.

Jack: I really like your blouse, Jill.
Jill: This old thing!
Jack: I also like your hair done like that.
Jill: I like your hair, too.
Jack: In addition to the way you look, I really like you, Jill.
Jill: Let's get to work; we have a lot to do.
Jack: Yes, it was really nice of you to help me carry that bucket of water, Jill.
Jill: Anyone could have helped you do that.
Jack: But only you would have pushed me down the hill afterwards, you compliment phobic!

How often have you experienced giving someone a compliment only to have it discarded with an "Oh, that old thing" or "It is really nothing special"? Did you ever feel that you had poor taste after presenting a genuine compliment only to have it thrown back at you with a "You must be kidding" or "You can't be really mean that"? Under these kinds of circumstances, you would probably be less likely to compliment that individual in the future.

A compliment phobic individual is one who experiences a high rise in his anxiety level when giving or receiving a compliment. As a result of this increased SUDS, the individual will often negate the compliment ("This old thing!"), will respond immediately with a compliment to the other individual (I like your hair too"), or will just ignore the entire situation ("Let's get to work' we have a lot to do"). Sometimes these responses are carried out in the name of humility: Unfortunately, some individuals are taught that it is improper to be anything except overly humble. At other times, these responses are the result of past experiences where something negative has followed a positive statement. Consider the following situations, which may unfortunately turn an individual off to compliments in the future:

> Boss to employee: Hi, Jack. I want you to know that you have been doing an excellent job around here. Your work has been very valuable to us. It really is too bad that business has been off lately, because now we are going to be forced to fire you!
>
> Jack to Jill: Hi, Jill. You really look nice today. Would you lend me $50.00.

It is no wonder that a person who is frequently subjected to this type of interaction would become cautious of compliments. However, in that this is not the usual course of events, we believe that individual's should be able to give honest compliments to others, as well as acknowledge, accept, and enjoy an honest compliment given to them. It is a sad statement to make about our culture, but often times we feel people are telling the truth when they are criticizing us and think they are not serious when they are giving us compliments. To throw away a compliment is to throw away some of the potential for good feelings. The ability to give a compliment to others and the ability to receive a compliment from others is a very important social skill. When you compliment someone on his behavior towards you, you are in a sense, asking him to continue to do that behavior. You are letting him know what you like. If you are important to that other person, the chances of his continuing to behave in that manner are increased. Likewise, when you accept an honest compliment from another, you are listening to important feedback. A compliment, if accepted rather than rejected, can make both the giver and the receiver feel good. It is a mutually rewarding activity. In doing assertion training, we have been very impressed by the changes that occur once an individual is able to receive compliments from and give compliments to others. Frequently, the individual reports feeling happier and being more at ease in social settings. Behaviorally, we will find the individual making more self-complimentary statements in the group as well as completing an increased number of homework assignments outside of the group where he has an opportunity to give and receive these "warm fuzzies."

The first step in aiding a compliment phobic individual is to desensitize the high anxiety level (SUDS) experienced while being complimented. This can be accomplished following a traditional desensitization procedure (Wolpe, 1969) or it can be carried out in an in vivo desensitization manner (Wolpe, 1969) during the group session.. When receiving a compliment, we ask our clients to maintain eye contact with the other individual, smile, and say "Thank you" or give some other appropriate response following the compliment.

Jack:	Jill, I really like the dress you are wearing.
Jill:	Thank you, Jack. I just bought it last week when I was on vacation. (Notice the free information).

We believe this is far more appropriate than negating the compliment ("Oh, you mean this old thing?") or just returning with another compliment:

Jack:	Jill, I really like the dress you are wearing.
Jill:	Jack, I really like your buckle shoes.
Jack:	I like your hair.
Jill:	And I like your hair too.
Editor:	Enough of this. Go to your room, Jack and Jill.

The verbal skill in receiving a compliment is relatively easy to train; the more difficult aspect is lowering the individual's anxiety. Initially, we ask the individual to rank order the other members in the group in terms of the individual from whom he would feel most comfortable in receiving some compliments. Following the client's hierachy, we then ask the group member who elicits the least amount of anxiety to begin complimenting the phobic individual. When the client is able to maintain a low SUDS level and respond with a comfortable and convincing "Thank you,", the next person on the hierarchy is asked to begin complimenting the client. This procedure is followed until the client is able to report a lowered anxiety level to all the honest compliments that are bestowed upon him.

SKILL TWELVE: "STRENGTH BOMBARDMENT"

Closely related to giving and receiving compliments is the procedure of "Strength Bombardment," developed by Herbert Otto (1969(and described in Alberti & Emmons' (1974) book, Your Perfect Right. Essentially, this procedure involves having the client speak about himself in only positive terms for a period of one or two minutes while the rest of the group members listen. When the client is finished, the other group members then proceed to describe the positive characteristics they see or like about the individual for one to four minutes. This done until each person is given the opportunity to experience the "Strength Bombardment". However, as Alberti & Emmons (1974) have cautioned, the therapist may initially need to do some prompting with the client in order for him to get started, and the trainer should also be prepared to fill in any periods of silence during the group response time: Otherwise the client may actually begin to feel worse.

We have used this procedure in order to strengthen the person's ability to describe some of his positive qualities and to promote a higher level of self-esteem. It is used only after the group members have had the opportunity to interact and get to know one another fairly well so that their responses can, in fact, be genuine. As such, we have found the procedure especially useful prior to a member's "graduation" from the group or as one of the concluding exercises in a workshop. When there has not been sufficient time for each member to receive the feedback from the entire group, we have asked the group members to break into smaller groups (three to five people) with people they have come to know and to carry out this procedure described in this book, one of us brave authors initially demonstrates the self-disclosure and receiving feedback from the group. Although we can justify this on the basis of good modeling, the fact is that this has proven to be one of the nicest "warm fuzzies" we have devised for ourselves in doing these groups; after all, therapists need "warm fuzzies" too.

SKILL THIRTEEN: COMMUNICATION OF FEELING WITH THE USE OF "I" STATEMENTS

Throughout our work with others, we encourage the verbal expression of open, honest feelings. For the most part, we believe this can be done without the client experiencing negative consequences and without violating the rights and dignity of the other person even when the client is feeling angry, hurt, or disappointed. In setting up a behavioral rehearsal situation, we typically ask the client, "What would you like to say or tell this other person?" Some typical responses to this question are, "I want to tell him that I would like for us to go out more often," or "I want to tell him that I do not like his nagging me about spending so much money," or "I want to be able to tell her how deeply I feel for her." When these individuals are asked to role-play the situation and communicate these feelings, the responses they give are often, "You do not take me out enough," or "Stop your nagging," or "Do you really love me?" These statements tend to make the other person defensive, and they interfere with more open, honest communication.

As part of our assertion training procedures, we encourage using "I" statements, rather than using "You" statements. "I" statements relate specifically to what the person is feeling thinking, and experiencing. The "I" statements are often avoided because individuals report that they feel more vulnerable after making one of these statements. It is true that an individual is more vulnerable after using the word "I"; however, the use of "I" statements provides a means of communication whereby individuals can become much closer to their relationship rather than further apart. Consider the following interaction between Ruth (R) and Vern (V).

R: You are not taking me out enough.
V: I have been very busy lately.
R: You are always too busy for me lately.
V: You don't seem to appreciate the strain I have been under lately.
R: You are always giving me excuses.
V: You are not so perfect either. How about the fact that you have not cleaned the house in over two weeks?
R: Why don't you help out with the housework if you are so disappointed?

At this point, the interaction between Ruth and Vern is likely to accelerate into an argument of accusations and name-calling. "You" statements tend to promote defensiveness and anger. As such, they are not very conducive to a closer relationship where two individuals are trying to express their feeling and, possible, their annoyances. Now consider Ruth's complaint, but this time with the exchange of "I" for "You" statements.

R: I am feeling left out by the fact that we do not spend very much time together lately.
V: I have been very busy lately.
R: I can understand that, but I still am feeling left out and hurt by the lack of attention.
V: You don't seem to appreciate the strain I have been under lately.
R: I try to, but it is hard for me when some of my needs for attention are not being met. I think I could be more appreciative of your stress if I felt that we were working on things together.
V: That sounds reasonable. I'll try to include more of your needs as well as my own in the future.
R: I would really appreciate that, and, in turn, I will try to take into account your stress at work. Maybe I can do something to get out of the house more often on my own so that I do not feel so cooped up with the kids.
V: Sounds good. How about enrolling in that music class you were interested in at college? If you get started with that, maybe we can buy some season tickets for the opera or something like that next fall.

Granted, all conversations do not have such reasonable endings. However, the point is that both Ruth and Vern were able to express some of their needs and irritations without getting into a heated argument.

"I" statements certainly do not solve all the problems of poor communication. However, more and more we are finding that these "I" statements help to facilitate a more open, honest, and mutually satisfying relationship.

SKILL FOURTEEN: STATEMENTS INSTEAD OF QUESTIONS

Closely related to the more frequent use of "I" statements, we encourage clients to make statements of their feeling rather than disguising them behind a dishonest question. A dishonest question is one in which we are not willing to equally accept a "Yes" or "No" answer (Knox, 1971) or is a question we ask when we should really be making a statement of self-disclosure. For example, if you really wanted to go out and play cards one evening, a statement like "I would really like to play cards tonight" is more appropriate than "Is it all right if I play cards tonight?" -- especially if you would sit home and pout or start an argument if you received "No" answer. Likewise the question, "Do you love me?" may be a cover-up for "I really miss you and would like you to spend more time with me." The point we are trying to make here is that some questions are truly questions ("Do you want coffee or tea with your dinner?") whereas other questions are coded messages for hidden feelings. Rather than assume that the other person will be able to decipher the coded message (remember the myth of the good friend) or will respond with "correct" answer by chance alone, we encourage clients to state their feelings and wished directly, with the use of a direct "I" statement.

SKILL FIFTEEN: POSITIVE CONTINGENCY CONTRACTING

Simply stated, a positive contract is a mutual exchange of regards between two (or more) individuals who are willing to negotiate. In other words, "If you do something that I want or allow me to do something I enjoy, then I will do something that you enjoy or support you doing something that you want." There are, however, some things that are non-negotiable in working out a contract. For example, if a person wanted to take a vacation with an attractive coworker of the opposite sex, the exchange between that person and his spouse would probably not be rewarding. In addition to negotiating for reasonable items, the contract should be fair in the sense that both parties should feel that the exchange of rewards is fairly equal. This is a very individualistic matter. Some persons, who are not assertive enough to speak up for what they feel is fair, will agree to the terms of a contract just to "keep the peace." If this occurs, the contract is likely to fail in that the person will feel cheated and will usually undermine or sabotage the agreement in some way. It should also be pointed out that there is a difference between a positive contract and a negative contract. In a positive contract, the two individuals exchange mutually agreed upon rewards; in a negative contract, the implication is that "If you do not do what I enjoy or allow me to do something I want to do, I will do something negative to you."

In doing assertion training we have found that the utilization of positive contingency contracting has been extremely useful in helping individuals get more of their personal needs met. One of our first objectives in assertion training is to help individuals recognize that they have personal needs, and that they should not feel guilty in wanting some of these needs to be satisfied. A second step is teaching individuals how to appropriately verbalize these needs to others. This is accomplished through discussion and behavioral rehearsal. Here again it is important that individuals learn how to make statements about what their feelings, needs, and wishes are instead of the too frequently used strategy of asking questions. Once they are able to identify and verbalize what some of their needs or wishes are without experiencing high amounts of tension and guilt, the next step is teaching them how more of these needs or wishes might be satisfied. It is at this point that positive contracting can be introduced and practiced.

In role-playing contracting situations, it is important that the person can state his feeling/needs/wishes clearly, that the person can keep his anxiety level low enough so that he hears what the other person is saying or requesting in return, and that the individual is able to say "No" to what he feels is an unfair contract. As stated previously, contracting only works if both parties are willing to listen and negotiate. When this agreement to listen and negotiate is not present, contracting may not be possible. However, our experience has been that most couples, friends, etc., are willing to engage in contracting because something positive stands to be gained for each of them. In some cases it may be necessary to make an agreement in which neither party gets exactly what he originally requested, but where more needs are satisfied that would be satisfied otherwise: If one person wanted to spend a two week vacation fishing and the other individual wanted to spend the time shopping for antique furniture, it may be possible to pick a place where some time could be spend fishing and some time could be spent shopping.

We have used contracting rather extensively in our assertion training sessions and with homework assignments. It can be extremely valuable between husband and wife, parent and child, student tan teacher, friend and friend (Home et al., 1969; Stuart, 1969; Liberman, 1970; DeRisi & Butz 1975). One of the advantages of negotiating and contracting is that it fosters a relationship where each person can openly communicate some of his needs rather than just criticizing the other person. In order to get what you want, you must believe that we know what the other individual wants. At other times, such as in a parent-child interaction, we tend to utilize our authority position rather than negotiate a fair and honest settlement. Negotiation and contracting help to alleviate some of these problems, often drawing people closer together rather than just having them "dig in" and try to defend their wishes or desires. At times, this digging into defend one's rights may be the only alternative; however, in most situations, especially when both parties care for one another, we have found that negotiation and contracting offer a more equitable solution.

We recognize that when one first begins to use these approach skills, they may seem awkward and stilted. However, with some effort and repeated practice, these skills can be comfortable adopted into the person's ongoing behavioral repertoire, resulting in greater need satisfaction and enhanced positive feelings. These skills may not result in a successful experience each and every time they are utilized; however, as one of the Rolling Stones' songs states, "You can't always get what you want, but if you try ... you might find you get what you need."

INITIATING AND MAINTAINING CONVERSATIONS

Taken from: Assert Yourself! by Galassi and Galassi

You have the right to initiate conversations with other people. Most people enjoy meeting others and usually respond favorably to people who attempt to initiate contact with them. On occasion, some people will not welcome such interactions. In these instances, you have the responsibility not to force yourself on them. Unfortunately, it is not immediately clear whether an individual is unwilling to engage in a conversation or whether he/she is initially shy or distrustful. After a few comments, such a differentiation often can be made. Unwillingness to engage in social interactions is sometimes indicated by: lack of smiles, hostile looks or comments, unresponsive non-verbal behavior, curt responses, and failure to ask the initiator questions in return. Conversely, willingness to engage in social interaction is indicated by: frequent smiles and gestures which indicate non-verbal responsiveness, verbal responses which disclose personal information, and/or questions directed to the initiator.

Many people report difficulty in knowing when to initiate a conversation and how to do it. It usually is easier to begin a conversation if you have the other person's attention and if you are not more than a few feet away so that you can be heard easily. Once you catch the other person's eye, you can smile and say whatever it is that you would like to say. In most initial conversations, people search for a topic of common interest to break the ice, for example, "I notice you are reading ____________. Are you in Dr. Frederick's English class?" or "Hi, I'm Bill Smith and I work in production. I've seen you around here lately, and I was wondering in which department you work."

Once a common topic has ben established, there are several ways of maintaining and expanding the conversation. One way is to make a statement and then ask the other person for his/her views on the matter. Another way is to disclose personally relevant information such as likes, dislikes, attitudes, and so on. It is important that what you disclose be relevant to the topic and not be so personal that it seems out of place. Most people do not divulge their deepest secrets to total strangers. The idea is to make your comments gradually a little more personal so that the conversation becomes more meaningful. Another procedure is not to answer questions with a simple yes or no, but to give your answer and perhaps explain your views, so that the other person has something to which he/she can respond. Also, asking questions which require more than a simple yes or no answer is helpful. Instead of asking, "Do you like Smith, the guy running for mayor?: you can say, "What do you think of Smith's views?" The second question encourages more participation in the conversation than the first question.

We suggest that you not rely solely on one of these procedures to the exclusion of others, since this can result in a mechanical or stilted conversation (like conversations in which you only ask the other person a series of questions). Rather, your goal is to integrate these procedures so that the conversation flows smoothly. At first, you may find that you are self conscious, but this feeling will be reduced over time as you practice your skills.

Listed below are some of the common counterproductive attitudes that block attempts to initiate social interaction.

COUNTERPRODUCTIVE BELIEFS ABOUT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

I don't have the right to impose on or bother other people.
What evidence do I have that initiating a conversation and trying to be friendly is equivalent to imposing on or bothering other people? Most people enjoy meeting others. If they feel that I am bothering them they will indicate this to me in one way or another. Besides, am I afraid of bothering them or of being rejected by them? If I want to start a conversation with someone, I should be able to do so.

But he/she is so important that someone like me can't just go up and start a conversation. It's not right.
Here is another belief that does not help me to feel that way I want to feel. He/she puts on his/her slacks the same way I do and has the same needs that I have. Who knows, perhaps the fact that he/she is so important intimidates people and makes it unlikely that he/she has very many friendly conversations with other people. Maybe I'm doing him/her a favor by beginning a friendly conversation.

COUNTERPRODUCTIVE BELIEFS ABOUT HOW I SHOULD BEHAVE OR APPEAR TO OTHERS.

I don't know what to say. If I don't say something brilliant, the other person will think that I'm an idiot, and I should be a brilliant conversationist.
Well, this belief certainly doesn't help me to feel the way I want

to feel. It prevents me from meeting new people. When I think about the topics of most conversations, realize that they are not about such profound issues. People talk about the weather, TV shows, class other people, and so on. I can discuss those issues, too. Perhaps what I say is not as important as is clearly indicating my interest in making contact with the other person. If the other person thinks that I'm an idiot, that's his/her problem. At least I'm brave enough to try to meet someone new.

COUNTERPRODUCTIVE OR ERRONEOUS BELIEFS ABOUT PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES

It's risky to start conversations and, besides, the other person may not like me.

Once again, I've discovered a belief that doesn't help me to feel the way I want to feel. I can't be like by everyone. If I don't say anything, I minimize the short-run risk of saying something for which I may not be liked; however, I also increase the likelihood of the long run consequences of having few friends and therefore not having anyone to like me. It's a matter of probabilities. The conversations I initiate, the more chances I have for meeting new friends. So what if it doesn't work out this time? If I keep trying, some of my attempts will prove very satisfying.

PRACTICE SITUATION

PERSONAL SITUATION -- INITIATING AND MAINTAINING CONVERSATIONS

Describe
Situation:

You:

Other
Person:

You:

Other
Person:

You:

MODULE #5 -- HOMEWORK

1. Practice your conversational skills with someone who you are going to be in contact for a brief period of time. e.g. - someone in the elevator or bus, gas station.
2. Choose an acquaintance or a friend with whom you would like to develop a closer, supportive relationship and practice self-disclosure and emphathy.
3. Respond assertively to feedback you receive from anyone and express assertively the behavior you like from others.

"Postive and Negative Strokes"

4. Dealing with Fear.

FEAR

1. My biggest assertive fear?

2. What I'm getting out of this workshop so far to deal with my fear?

3. What I plan to do over the rest of the workshop to get my fear under control?

INDEX OF MATERIALS INCLUDED

MODULE # 6

BLOCKS TO ASSERTION AND RELAXATION THERAPY

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STEPS TO ASSERTION: A CHECKLIST
(BEHAVIOR, BELIEFS AND FEELINGS)

1. Clarify the situation and focus on the issue. What is my goal? What exactly do I want to accomplish?

2. How will assertive behavior on my part help me accomplish my goal?

3. What would I usually do to avoid asserting myself in this situation?

4. Why would I want to give that up and assert myself instead?

5. What might be stopping me from asserting myself?
    - a) Am I holding on to irrational beliefs? If so, what are they?
    - b) How can I replace these irrational beliefs with rational ones?
    - c) Have I, as a person, been taught to behave in ways that make it difficult for me to act assertively in the present situation? What ways? How can I overcome this?
    - d) What are my rights in this situation? (State them clearly)?

6. Am I anxious about asserting myself? What techniques can I use to reduce my anxiety?

7. Have I done my homework? Do I have information I need to go ahead and act?

8. Will I:
    - a) let the other person know I hear and understand him/her?
    - b) let the other person know how I feel?
    - c) tell him/her what I want?

CATASTROPHIC SELF-TALK

IT WOULD BE AWFUL

if every person in the world doesn't like and approve of me.

if I ever make a mistake.

if I can't find a perfect solution.

if someone doesn't want to see me again.

if I am wrong.

if my opinion is challenged.

if someone gets angry at me.

if I am disapproved of.

if I get angry.

if I get emotional.

if I lose my job.

if my relationship doesn't work out.

if I am criticized.

if I can't think of anything to say.

if I am rejected.

if I blush or if my voice is shaky.

if everyone doesn't consider me to be a nice person.

if I am accused of being unfeminine or unmasculine.

if someone doesn't listen to me.

if someone knows more than I do.

Taken from Self-assertion for Women: A Guide to Becoming Androgynous

IRRATIONAL BELIEFS (Example Sheet)

1) If I assert myself, others will get mad at me.
   Rational Counterpart
   a) If I assert myself, the affect may be positive, neutral, or negative. However, since assertion involved legitimate rights, I feel that the odds are in my favor to have some positive results.
   b) If I assert myself, people may or may not get mad at me; they may feel closer to me; like what I say or do; help me to solve the problem.
2) If I assert myself and people do become angry, I will be devastated, it will be awful.
   Rational Counterpart
   a) Even if others do become angry and unpleasant, I am capable of handling it without falling apart.
   b) If I assert myself when it is appropriate, I don't have to feel responsible for the other person's anger. It may be his problem.
3) Although I prefer others to be straight forward with me, I'm afraid that if I am open with others and say "no", I will hurt them.
   Rational Counterpart
   a) If I'm assertive, other people may or may not feel hurt.
   b) Most people are not more fragile than I am. If I prefer to be dealt with directly, quite likely others will too.
4) If my assertion hurts others, I am responsible for their feelings.
   Rational Counterpart
   a) Even if others do feel hurt by my assertive behavior, I can let them know I care for them while also being direct about what I need or want.
   b) Although at times others will be taken aback by my assertive behavior, most people are not so vulnerable and fragile that they will be shattered by it.
5) It is wrong and selfish to turn down legitimate requests. Other people will think I'm terrible and won't like me.
   Rational Counterpart
   a) Even legitimate requests can be refused assertively.
   b) It is acceptable to consider my own needs -- sometimes before those of others.
   c) I can't please all of the people all of the time.
6) At all costs, I must avoid making statements and asking questions that might make me look ignorant or stupid.
   Rational Counterpart
   a) It's all right to lack information or to make a mistake. It just shows I'm human.
7) Assertive people are cold and inhuman. If I'm assertive I'll be so unpleasant that people won't like me.
   Rational Counterpart
   a) Assertive people are direct and honest, and behave appropriately. They show a genuine concern for other people's rights and feelings as well as their own. Their assertiveness enriches their relationships with others.

(Ellis A.B.C. Theory)

USING COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS:

RATIONAL EMOTIVE PROCEDURES

Most psychological problems involving assertion have cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. Therefore, a combination of a cognitive, affective, and behavioral approach to assertion training seems most appropriate. People do make assumptions about themselves and others which sometimes are irrational and lead to anxiety, intense anger, guilt, avoidance, and/or unassertive behaviors. The cognitive restructuring component of assertion training can help participants develop a framework to assess their thinking and its relation to their resultant feelings and behaviors. In our approach, part of the cognitive restructuring involves a highly focused version of Albert Ellis' rational motive therapy (Ellis, 1962, 1971,1973, Ellis & Harper, 1975).

In brief, it is Ellis' conviction that people do not have direct "emotional" reactions to most situations but rather that they think first. Thus, people feel anxious, depressed, and guilty because they believe that it is "awful" and catastrophic" to fail to accomplish a major goal or be rejected by a significant person. Moreover people feel intense anger when others behave unfairly toward them. They believe they should never be treated unfairly, it is terrible when they are, and others should be severely punished for doing so. What people label as their emotional reactions are mainly caused by their conscious and preconscious assumptions, evaluations, and interpretation of situations.

The A-B-C PARADIGM

Ellis' approach to the relationship between thinking, feelings, and behaviors follows an A-B-C paradigm. Point A represent an activity or situation which an individual finds upsetting, e.g. asking for a raise. At point B the person might irrationally believe: "If I ask for a raise and my boss doesn't give it to me, I must be incompetent and a failure at everything and that's intolerable." At point C the person consequently feels anxious, depressed, and therefore might avoid asking for a raise or ask in a non-assertive manner. "The primary distinction between an irrational idea and the rational alternative is that with the former belief one convinces oneself that things are unbearable which leads to intense anger while the latter alternative leads to frustration, irritation, and, usually positive action. The distinction is not merely semantic. The resultant feelings are qualitatively different. Sadness, Frustration, and Irritation result from strong preferences, desires or wants. However, depression, despair, excessive guilt, and rage arise from the belief that "I must ... and if I do not, it is awful and I can't stand myself (or it)! (Ellis & Harper, 1975)

Ellis (1973) suggests that the A-B-C theory can be extended to points D and E. These points constitute the interventions which can be employed in an assertion group. At point D, the trainer and the participant work to determine the irrational beliefs connected to the unassertive behaviors. the critical distinction between rational and irrational thinking is that when one is rejected, fails at a major task, or is treated unfairly, it is (1) rational and appropriate to think it is unfortunate and an inconvenience and to feel sad, frustrated, or irritated, and (2) irrational to catastrophize by convincing oneself that it is awful and terrible to think absolutistically that one be treated fairly. At point D, the irrational beliefs are then disputed and challenged: What would be so awful if I asked in an ineffectual manner? How would my boss' displeasure be terrible? How could his rejection destroy me? What if I didn't get the raise?

At point E, the participant substitutes more rational idea for the irrational beliefs previously held. For example, before asking his boss for a raise, the participant might think: "I would like my boss to agree with my reasons for getting a raise." The participant would then feel concerned and begin planning his presentation in a thoughtful manner. If he is turned down by his boss, he might rationally think: "It does not mean that I am incompetent. It is inconvenient that I did not get the raise, but I can handle." Such thinking would reduce his anxiety before seeing his boss. Afterwards if he did not receive the raise, he would then likely feel disappointed, displeased, frustrated, and sad. If he thought irrationally at this point (My boss doesn't think I can do anything right! How dare he treat me this way! It's unfair!), he would more likely feel enraged, he might become defensive and blame other, rationalize his mistakes, develop psychosomatic reactions, or become preoccupied with the hopelessness of the situation and do nothing about it. Such a person usually feel quite insecure and may have brief periods of self-doubt and depression which are quickly covered up again by aggressive behaviors. Such self-defeating thoughts are based on a magical belief that things ought to be different, rather that the more reasonable conviction that things would be better if they were different.

Many people dichotomize their thinking and their feelings instead of conceptualizing the A-B-C-D-E steps. Participants often incorrectly describe themselves as being in a state of conflict between "my head and my gut". In the group, they might say: "Intellectually, I know I want to ask for a date, but emotionally, every time I have something really worthwhile to say and then I think to myself that it probably isn't that important.: In either case the conflict appears to be between thoughts and feelings, yet neither is always reliable. Consequently, such generalization as "always trust your gut" or think before you act" are not always valid. In actuality, there is always thinking and feeling going on, some of which is rational and appropriate and some irrational and excessive. Thus the earlier dichotomized conceptualizations of dating might be restated as follows, to include both the thinking and feeling: "If I think that I want to ask for a date and believe it would be nice if the person accepted and unfortunate if not, I would then feel calm and relaxed in asking someone for a date and I believe that if I do it badly or I am rejected, then I must be a boob and a failure, I will feel awful and berate myself and become severely depressed." Thus the dichotomy between thinking and feeling disintegrates when participants recognize the A-B-C's wherein thinking and feeling occur together.

A case example / The relationship between underlying irrational thinking and unassertiveness can best be explained by an example. One participant was concerned about her inability to tell a man her desire to have their relationship become something more than a friendship. she identified the problem quite clearly, yet experienced considerable difficulty imagining herself saying what she knew she wanted to say to him. As she began to look for irrational assumptions, she realized that her fears were: 1) This man might not want the more romantic sexual relationship she wanted; he might reject her (she is a failure as a woman) and that would be awful; (2) Since she was not experienced in such conversations, she might appear foolish in bringing it up and that would be terrible, because "I must be perfect, I'm not any fool"; and most importantly, (3) If he did reject her, she would be all alone and not have any relationship at all and that would be unbearable. The resultant behavior with him was to avoid intimacy and to hope that he would bring up the subject. While away from him, she was anxious, irritable, worried, and sometimes angry with herself and with him.

In the group, she identified and challenged each of these irrational assumptions, substituting more reasonable thoughts for each. She then practiced the conversation. In the real situation she did express her interest to the man, who had also been holding back hoping for a more intimate relationship. In this case, the participant was greatly rewarded for her assertiveness. If, however, the man was not responsive to her wishes, she might have done further work on the irrational fears of being alone forever and being a worthless, undesirable person. This participant was better able to profit from behavior rehearsals after having identified and challenged the underlying irrational beliefs supporting her non-assertive behavior.

We have often found that the more participants think rationally, the greater the likelihood of their acting assertively. This cognitive approach to personal growth and therapeutic change focuses heavily on helping participants to utilize their own internal capabilities to assess and challenge their over-and under-reactions to situations and problems. It is a process of de-awfulizing and de-absolutizing thinking and of recognizing the internal resources available to meet problems and conflicts.

TEN IRRATIONAL IDEAS

Ellis (1975) cites ten irrational beliefs which are commonly learned and which lead to disturbing emotion.* We believe (along with Ellis and others) that three of these beliefs are the basic irrational assumptions upon which most persons function ineffectively. The remaining seven beliefs are also irrational and can lead to unassertive behaviors; however, they are probably "second order" cognitive reactions after one of the three basic beliefs is operating. Since we have regrouped the ideas, they will be numbered in a different order from the listing in Ellis & Harper's A New Guide to Rational Living (1975). Each irrational idea is stated below along with examples of how such thoughts can result in unassertive behaviors. More rational beliefs are also presented.

The three most basic irrational ideas deal with the issues of personal rejection, personal competence, and fairness.

Irrational Idea Number One: You must - yes, must - have sincere love and approval almost all the time from all the people you find significant/ If a person thinks that assertiveness will result in disapproval, then that person will likely engage in non-assertive behaviors which might include (1) never expressing opinions, (2) avoiding conflict even when others violate personal rights, (3) never expressing personal desires, (4) holding back feeling (both positive and negative), and (5) withdrawing from social interaction or intimate relationships even though desired.

One group participant was unable to confront her neighbor with the fact that his dogs regularly strewed her garbage over the street; another avoided restricting or discipling his children's misbehavior; while a third was unwilling to deal with a neighbor who made unreasonable demands on her time; and a fourth participant was not informing his lover about what he wanted and what he enjoyed in their sexual relationship. Each of these group members came to recognize that the fear of rejection or disapproval was the basis for their non-assertive behaviors.

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*Readers are encouraged to read Ellis' Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy (1962), and the more recent, A New Guide to Rational Living (Ellis & Harper, 1975) for a fuller calaboration of rational - emotive principles and an analysis of the irrationality of each irrational Idea. Ellis' Humanistic Psychotherapy (1973) offers an excellent explanation of rational therapy principles and procedures.

Some general rational alternatives to Irrational Idea Number One are: (1) I would like to be approved of by every significant person, but I do not need such approval; (2) If I am not approved of by someone I would like to have like me, I can attempt to determine what it is that person does not like about the way I behave and decide whether I want to change it' (3) If I decide that this rejection is not based on any inappropriate behavior on my part, I can find others I can enjoy being with; (4) I can determine what I want to do rather than adapting or reacting to what I think others want.

IRRATIONAL IDEA NUMBER TWO: You must prove yourself thoroughly competent, adequate, and achieving, or you must at least have real competence or talent at something important! This form of absolutistic thinking has resulted in such non-assertive behaviors as: (1) being extremely anxious, to the point of being unwilling to deliver a presentation at a professional conference; (2) worrying excessively (with resultant behavioral dysfunctions) over upcoming student teaching; (3) prefacing almost ever task which requires some skill with profuse criticism of external influences which make the accomplishment of the task less likely (and thereby not one's own "fault"); (4) avoiding social interactions for fear of having nothing worthwhile to say; (5) avoiding trying out for enjoyable athletic activities for fear of failure; (6) being extremely anxious, as a new member, of expressing opinions of Board of Education meetings.

The critical ingredients of this irrational assumption are its perfectionistic expectation, the absolutistic quality of the perfectionistic expectation (I must do perfectly well), and the assumed tragedy if perfection is not attained. Consequently, general rational messages could be: (1) I would like to be perfect or best at this task but I do not need to be: (2) I'm still successful when I do things imperfectly; (3) What I do doesn't have to be perfect in order to be good; (4) I may be happier if I am successful, but success does not determine my worth as a person, unless I let it; (5) I will be happier if I attempt to achieve at a realistic level rather than a perfect level; (6) I still want to achieve and to be successful and if I am, I will likely be happier, If I am not successful, I will likely be unhappy but not depressed and miserable; (7) It is impossible for anyone to be perfectly competent, achieving, etc.; (8) Above all, if I demand that I be perfect, I will always be pushing or worrying when I'll slip; instead, if I do what I want and what I enjoy as well as I can, I'll feel happier and perform better.

IRRATIONAL IDEA NUMBER THREE: You have to view life as awful terrible, horrible, or catastrophic when things do not go the way you would like them to go/ Some people act on this irrational assumption by whining, complaining about, or bemoaning their "tragedy." Often they will withdraw into isolation, or speak extremely bitterly about others (*especially certain groups of people such as men, women, bosses, children, or mother-in-law), or act helpless and destroyed. Essentially, they feel and act victimized.

One group member who was an undergraduate student was unfairly accused of cheating on a test by a teaching assistant. The student immediately agitated to the point of yelling disruptively and making idle threats. When the T.A. walked away, the student rushed to the course professor and launched into another hysterical outburst about how unfairly the T.A. had treated him. Although the professor agreed to look into the matter, several days passed and the student launched another outburst with the dean of the college, loudly charging he was being railroaded by the "system," The dean responded by directing him back to the professor (and out of his office as quickly as possible).

The point here is that each step taken by the student was probably a reasonable one; however, the overly emotional manner in which he presented himself (vacillating between fear and anger) and his inordinate focus on how unfairly he was treated only led to his being treated with even more avoidance. Moreover, he expended a great deal of time and energy ruminating over this situation. Had he expressed serious concern and irritation toward the teaching assistant and primarily focused on how to resolve such an accusation, he would likely have received a more responsive audience at least in the professor and the dean.

Another participant's wife left him after twelve years of marriage. In the limited interactions he did engage in with others, he referred ad nauseam to how unfairly she treated him after he had given her the best years of his life. In social conversations he was inclined to rant and rave about what a louse his wife has been, hoping to enlist others' sympathy. His presenting concern to the group was his ability to engage in conversations where he made friends. This case is a good example of a situation where role playing social conversations is not enough; the person also needs to change the self-statements and cognitions which prompt the present dysfunctional behavior. The problem was presented as a behavioral deficit (poor social skills), but it had cognitive components as well.

More rational substitutes for this illogical idea might be: This person has really treated me badly and I don't like the situation or that person's behavior. What can I do to change either? If I can't change either, it is frustrating but not dreadful and awful. I can begin to make plans for making my life as desirable and enjoyable as I can.

The next three irrational ideas pertain to aggressive, blaming behaviors; non-assertive, phobic responses; and denial of realities which do not yield perfect solutions.

IRRATIONAL IDEA NUMBER FOUR: People who harm you or commit misdeeds rate as generally bad, wicked, or villainous individuals and you should severely blame, damn, and punish them for their sins/ Persons who are operating under this irrational idea usually are behaving aggressively toward others. The aggression might be quite overt where the person is constantly criticizing other for their incompetence, lack of sensitivity, ignorance, or evilness. Constantly questioning the motives of others or excessively berating persons who actually have been unfair are the typical manifestations of this belief. In our groups, people often raise situations where someone else truly is behaving in a manner that is obnoxious or unfair. Because they have been believing the irrational idea that if someone acts badly they should be blamed, they often behave aggressively. Aggressive participants often treat others as worthless individual deserving of damnation because they have made mistakes raising their children, they drink too much, they have not succeeded in their careers or education, they do not do their work efficiently or effectively, they have been insensitive, and a host of even more foolish expectations.

People not only turn this severely critical thinking on others but also turn it in on themselves. When they fail at a task, are rejected by a significant other person, or treat someone else unfairly, they then damn themselves for being such bad or wicked persons. For example, a group member cited a situation where he punished himself by resigning from an important civic committee he truly enjoyed when he realized he had made a mistake that seriously held up the committee's work. Not only was he catastrophizing over being incompetent, but he actually told himself that he should be punished for his misdeed by leaving the work he so much enjoyed. In another case, a woman who was recently divorced decided that she was a failure as a person since she could not keep her marriage together and therefore deserved to be punished. Consequently, she was determined to work herself nearly to death to make it up to her children and to meet any of their needs to the denial of her own. Again, the basic idea of failure comes into play first and then the accompanying belief emerges that one is thereby deserving of punishment.

The more rational alternative are: (1) I can tell people firmly and directly what they are doing that has negative consequences for me, and I don't have to go so far as to punish them for their behavior; I may feel irritated or hurt and I don't have to berate that person; (2) When I do punish someone, it costs me, too, in energy and seldom does it facilitate correction or change; (3) Just because I think something is wrong, doesn't mean it is wrong; (4) I (or others) may have behave obnoxiously, unfairly, or incompetently, but that does not mean that I (or others) always will; (5) I can recognize and admit my own (or others') wrong acts and I can work hard to correct or have others correct this misdeed or its future occurrence.

IRRATIONAL IDEA NUMBER FIVE: If something seem dangerous or fearsome, you must become terribly occupied with and upset about it/ This irrational idea results in unrealistic anxiety as opposed to reasonable concern and fear, which keep us from playing on the freeways and exposing ourselves to other real dangers. Anxiety leads to preoccupation, which actually interferes with the clear thinking that would lead to control of the dangerous or fearsome situation. Any of the assertion situations cited under previous irrational ideas might also include the preoccupation presented here. Inappropriate fears of interacting with others, either individually or in group contexts, are typical situation where participants have responded with such debilitating anxiety.

In one case a student who was about to begin student teaching found himself unable to sleep worrying over this impending trauma. Another person agitated so much over her first date that she became physically ill.

More rational alternative beliefs would be: (1) If I am not as good (a speaker) as I (or others) would like, I can handle it; or (2) It's impossible to prevent a bad event from occurring by worrying about it; instead of worrying, I can think constructively and problem solve; (3) In all likelihood that event will not be as bad as I fear. Even if it is bad, I won't crumble, I can stand it though it will be uncomfortable. With such rational beliefs, participants can begin to practice more assertive behaviors which, heretofore, they have avoided.

IRRATIONAL IDEA NUMBER SIX: People and things should turn out better than they do and you have to view it as awful and horrible if you do not quickly find good solutions to life's hassles / Essentially the issue here is that many times people find themselves in circumstances where none of their options is desirable. When thinking irrationally, one would bemoan with absolutistic catastrophizing that things should not be that way and that it is awful that they are, rather than accept the reality. For example, one woman was so highly disturbed that her professors and her family were both making demands on her time that she could not do anything. She convinced herself that the situation was unbearable, that a perfect solution to accomplishing everything existed somewhere and that she was woefully inadequate as a mother and student. She felt guilty, angry, and depressed and was less effective in both roles. Before working on the behavioral components of being assertive, she and the trainers explored and challenged her thinking which unearthed the irrational belief. She substituted the following more rational assumptions which helped her to use the behavior rehearsals more fully: I do not need to overreact to these pressures. It doesn't appear that a "perfect" solution exists. I will accept that reality and do the best I can. I will determine my priorities and accomplish what I can in assertively communicating my limits to others. If others are not satisfied, that is unfortunate. I can work toward improving this situation.

The final four irrational ideas represent four distinctly different beliefs. Although the cognitions differ, the behavioral results are all likely to be passive or avoidant. Persons holding these irrational beliefs also tend to take less responsibility for themselves and their behavior. Consequently, these assumptions should be challenged so that participants can begin to utilize their cognitive, affective, and behavioral capacities to modify their own behavior.

IRRATIONAL IDEA NUMBER SEVEN: Emotional misery comes from external pressures and you have little ability to control your feeling or rid yourself of depression and hostility/ As participants begin to work on situations, they realize that this idea often plays a part in their unassertiveness. Some group members believe that they simply have a bad temper, or are "high strung" or are just always depressed. (Trainers, however, should not disregard the possibility of primary physiological disturbances which might contribute to pervasive mood states.) Behavior rehearsals which are directed at change through the use of the participant's own capacities are unlikely to be effective until this irrational idea is challenged and discarded, at least tentatively. People who operate under this irrational idea may be more listless and inactive in the group. They are not "pouters" or "whiners" who are looking for a rescuer, but rather have come to a genuine conviction that they can do little to change. Statements such as "I can't stand it when things start piling up, I just go to pieces" or "I guess that's just the way I am" or "He made me so angry" all imply some external cause for their behavior and feelings.

Interestingly, participants who erroneously believe that other people cause them to feel hurt, angry, or miserable often hold the reciprocal belief that they can cause others to feel upset, angry, hurt, or miserable. Consequently, they hold back the expression of their opinions, feelings, or needs for fear of causing disturbance to others. They fail to recognize that people have some choice in how they will respond. One person was unwilling to say no to an invitation to a date which she did not want to accept for fear she might hurt the other person severely. Another person did not answer his phone for three days for fear his parents would call and ask about his new living arrangement and be terribly upset and angry. Although he was also anxious about how he would handle their call, he was extremely upset about what his decision "would do to them." Non-assertive people seem, first, to worry inordinately about the impact they might have, erroneously believing that their opinions, feelings, and needs cause others to feel and behave in highly disturbed ways. Then, they decide to protect these others from their terrible powers by holding back, which often leads to their own frustrations and tensions.

Although we believe that one cannot make someone else angry, upset, or hurt, one can certainly behave in ways that make it very likely that others will respond with such feelings. We are not supporting the idea that people should say anything and everything, regardless of how hostile or harmful, and pass it off as the other person's total responsibility when he feel bad ("That's his problem!"). Although we do not control others, we can have some influence on them. Thus, we support the concept of responsible assertiveness where people behave in a way which takes others' feeling into consideration. One guideline we suggest that participant first determine how the other person is reacting to their behavior and then think about whether that truly seems to be an appropriate and reasonable response. If the person is hurt, angry, upset, or critical, check your own perception of your behavior. Try not to agree too fast or to deny defensively. If you agree that you may have been wrong or done something that did violate another's rights, you can admit that. If you disagree about the degree of impact of your behavior, you might express regret that the person choose to respond in that way but you still stand by what you said.

More rational alternatives to Irrational Idea Number Seven are: (1) I can stand it when things go wrong; I can choose to stand it if I want to; (2) I do have quite a bit of control over how I react to situations; (3) Others also have choices in how they react to me. I am responsible for my own behavior and can accept the reasonable consequences; as long as I respect the rights of others, I do not have to take 100 percent responsibility for their reactions to me.

IRRATIONAL IDEA NUMBER EIGHT: You will find it easier to avoid facing many of life's difficulties and self-responsibilities than to undertake more rewarding forms of self-discipline/ People who hold this belief sometimes react aggressively. One such person frequently blew up, partially because he felt he "must" have immediate relief from his irritations and worries and "could not tolerate" controlling these feelings. Non-assertive persons frequently believe that the immediate relief of discomfort is more important than the longer range displeasures resulting from avoidance and the discounting of their personal rights. With such individuals, we often develop contracts which not only establish systematic schedules for making specific changes, but also include immediate reinforcers for improvements (Malott, 1072). Participants work on such avoidances as not going to parties, not taking seminars which require open discussions, not making job interviews, not talking with their spouse about their needs, not confronting others with their behaviors.

More rational beliefs include: (1) Even though I get immediate relief when I avoid a disturbing situation or blow up, I feel unfulfilled and that is often as frustrating; (2) What I am avoiding will probably not be as awful as I convince myself it is; (3) Avoidance does not ultimately lead to pleasure.

IRRATIONAL IDEA NUMBER NINE: Your past remains all-important and because something once strongly influenced your life, it has to keep determining your feelings and behavior today/ This belief also supports behavioral patterns that are passive and deny the individual's potency. Group members often believe that they cannot change because the way they are happened to them long ago. They ignore some important facts: (1) in addition to learning ineffective behaviors were necessary for survival; (2) these behaviors may no longer be necessary for survival or a more effective behavior may now be an even better option; and (3) it is possible to learn more effective behaviors just as ineffective behaviors were learned in the past.

More rational thinking would support the conviction that: Although my past does exercise considerable influence, I am not fixed cognitively, effectively, or behaviorally, and I can change.

IRRATIONAL IDEA NUMBER TEN: You can achieve happiness by inertia and inaction or by passively and uncommittedly "enjoying yourself"/ Essentially, this form of irrational thinking is a "rationalization" to cover fear of some activity. Unfortunately, such inactivity breed greater passivity to the point where an individual can become highly withdrawn and almost blunted to stimulation. One group member created a dull, routinized daily pattern which avoided contact with others and left the person bored and passive. A fairly obvious rational alternative might be: I can decide to involve myself in other people, in feelings, in creating things, or in ideas.

Many people, upon reading these ten irrational idea, would not readily perceive themselves as operating under any of them. In the relatively short duration of most groups not everyone is willing to accept the fact that he is operating under irrational beliefs. Nor are some willing to believe that they can change their irrational beliefs and subsequent feeling and behaviors. We have, however, had considerable success in brief group training with many persons who have not only altered their thinking, but have generalized their rational ideas to many other situations not practiced or discussed in the group.

REDUCING ANXIETY AND PROMOTING RELAXATION

Taken from: THE ASSERTIVE WOMAN

The assertive woman not only knows how to develop her body image, she knows how to promote her own physical well-being. There are many sources of information on healthful food habits and exercise. We assume these are available to you. Our concern is with more subtle body influences, especially nervousness and anxiety, which afflict many women.

Anxiety will detract from your assertive body image because it shows itself in your behavior. For most people, acting assertively in new situations evokes some initial anxiety and nervousness, which can be alleviated by acting and by learning to relax.

What happens to your body when you feel anxious? Headaches, a "nervous stomach," asthma, and "dizzy spells" are common bodily indicators of anxiety. In more extreme forms, anxiety can be severe enough to be a contributing factor to ulcers, migraine headaches and heart attacks. In addition to the physical, discomfort anxiety can produce, it can also cause emotional discomfort. Some people get "cold feet" and so avoid approaching employers for a raise in salary and forego the additional income; "stage fright" prevents many people from speaking in front of a group, even though the speech may have been interesting and valuable to the group; others "clam up" when they are treated unfairly and sacrifice their self respect in the process.

When facing threatening and anxiety provoking situations, Doris Doormat feels she has no control over her anxiety. Her anxiety immobilizes and controls her. Being passive, Doris is frequently anxious and frustrated. Her anxiety is often at such a high level that she suffers from severe headaches or from fainting spells.

She avoids anxiety-provoking situations because she feels powerless to do anything about them. The more she tries to avoid anxiety-provoking situations, the stronger her anxiety becomes about facing them. The assertive woman, in contrast, is not a helpless victim of anxiety; she alleviates it by taking action.

By acting and therefore having control over what you do, you make it impossible for anxiety to control you. If you have felt that you couldn't tolerate a threatening situation - that your anxiety is so great that you really couldn't live through it - you have probably felt helpless to say or do anything. when you know that you can choose to assert yourself, you can live through threatening encounters and alleviate your anxiety because you can benefit, physically and / or emotionally, by saying or doing something. The value of this concept is stressed by Bower and other, including Butler, Cotler and Guerra.

Learning to relax can combat anxiety and be a good complement to assertion. You probably already practice forms of relaxation such as meditation, yoga, or a walk on the beach. While relaxation is not necessary for effective assertions, it can help you to feel more in control of your body.

You have probably noticed that you feel calmer and more relaxed after you have rested quietly even for a short time. By learning deep muscle relaxation, or any other forms of relaxation, you will be able to relax beyond this usual point. We recommend beginning with deep muscle relaxation as the easiest form to learn, but we also encourage you to explore other forms of relaxation. With practice you will be able to relax at will and counteract the tensions of anxiety arising from threatening situations.

We suggest that you practice deep muscle relaxation twice a day for one week. Try to be aware of particular muscle groups that are more difficult to relax that others, and give them special attention. For many people, the stomach, shoulders, and back are almost constantly tensed. When you have learned how to relax, you can practice relaxation together with acting assertively. Remember that you will alleviate your anxiety most effectively when you act as an assertive person.

TRAINING YOURSELF IN DEEP MUSCLE RELAXATION

You can use this guide to train yourself in deep muscle relaxation, a technique first developed by Jacobsen in 1938. choose a quiet, comfortable place where you won't be disturbed for half an hour. Go through relaxation while lying on the floor, a bed, or a reclining chair.

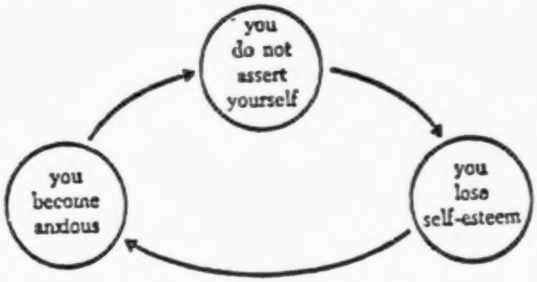
Concentrate on the muscle groups below, one at a time in the order presented. Create tension in the muscles by tightening them for five seconds and then relaxing them. For each muscle group a method is described for creating tension and achieving relaxation. The first time you try it, go through the procedure for each muscle group twice.

It is awkward to read the instructions while attempting to relax, and it may be inconvenient to have someone read the instructions to you. We suggest that an ideal method is to use a commercial tape recording of relaxation instructions, or to make your own tape recording.

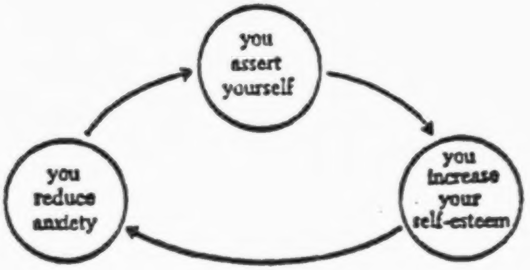
MUSCLE	TENSING METHOD
Forehead	Wrinkle forehead. Try to make your eyebrows touch your hairline for five seconds. Relax.
Eyes and Nose	Close your eyes as tightly as you can for five seconds. Relax.
Lips, Cheeks, and jaw	Draw corners of your mouth back and grimace for five seconds. Relax. Feel the calmness and warmth in your face.
Hands	Extend arms in front of you, clench fists tightly for five seconds. Relax and feel the warmth and calmness in your hands.
Forearms	Extend arms out against an invisible wall and push forward with hands for five seconds. Relax.
Upper Arms	Bend elbows. Tense biceps for five seconds. Relax, and feel the tension leave your arms.
Shoulders	Shrug shoulders up to your ears for five seconds. Relax.
Back	Arch your back off the floor or bed for five seconds. Relax. Feel the anxiety and tension disappearing.
Stomach	Tighten your stomach muscles for five seconds. Relax.
Hips, Buttocks	Tighten buttocks for five seconds. Relax
Thighs	Tighten thigh muscles by pressing legs together as tightly as you can for five seconds. Relax.
Feet	Bend ankles toward your body as far as you can, for five seconds. Relax.
Toes	Curl toes under as tightly as you can for five seconds. Relax.

AWAY WITH ANXIETY

Non-Assertive behavior is self-perpetuating. It becomes a part of a cycle that reinforces our low self-esteem. When we are passive even though we want to be assertive, we start feeling bad about ourselves. The worse we feel, the more anxious we become about trying to assert ourselves the next time. This anxiety continues to interfere with our assertive behavior. The cycle looks like this:



Anxiety inhibits assertive behavior. This is a basic principle of behavioral psychology. Therefore, in order to begin to change and act assertively, we must confront our anxiety and begin to reduce it. But how? The approach on which assertive training is based has us begin by changing our behavior - actually trying out assertive behavior that is likely to bring us positive results. Then, as we begin to get results, our feelings about ourselves begin to change; we become more confident. The more confident we become, the less we tend to be anxious, and the more likely we are to assert ourselves the next time. We can break the old self defeating cycle by changing our behavior, and as we do, we start a new cycle. It looks like this:



Sybil, an articulate, soft-spoken twenty-six year old, had recently been appointed to the executive board of the health care agency where she worked. She reported that she was self conscious about being the only woman board member, and that she was unhappy about being so afraid to speak up in the meetings.

"I feel as though everyone is waiting to hear what the token woman will say. I've been so silent that now I actually feel powerless. Decisions are being made that I don't agree with, and I just sit there. The less I speak up, the worse I feel about myself, and the more nervous I feel about saying what I really think. By now the rest of the board probably thinks I am a dud and wouldn't want to listen to me anyway."

We talked about Sybil's problem in our assertive training group. In the discussion she examined her rights and irrational beliefs, and then decided to play her own role with other members of the group. They acted as the board. The discussion and role playing greatly reduced her anxiety, and she decided to make a real effort to speak out at least twice at the next board meeting. Then we a talked about some techniques for anxiety reduction which she could use before going into the meeting.

With practice any one of us can learn these skills. Essentially, they are ways of reinforcing a decision to behave assertively before actually asserting ourselves. We want to emphasize that the greatest way to reduce anxiety is to actually change our behavior. Whatever we do to confront anxiety, rather than avoid it, can help reduce it. We encourage you to try the exercises in this module. We use them with our assertive training groups and we find that they are most effective when done regularly, preferably over a period of weeks. The ideal way to practice is with a friend of group of friends who can provide support and reinforcement for your effort.

EXERCISES IN REDUCING ANXIETY

1. Imagining a Successful Assertion

This exercise will help you imagine what it's like to feel successful with your assertion. Giving yourself a positive image of what it would be like to assert yourself can help to reduce your fear of trying it out.

Think of a situation requiring assertiveness, which makes you anxious. Close your eyes. Imagine yourself looking and feeling very self-confident and assertive. Picture yourself carrying out the assertion successfully. Think of one or several rewards you will receive for accomplishing this. Let yourself feel very good about this project.

2. Convert Messages or Self-Encouragement

Another way to reduce anxiety before beginning an assertion is to devise a message for yourself which will help to get you through the situation. When we ask our groups to do this, most of them are able to come up with potent, encouraging messages. Here are a few examples:

Abbey, who wanted her roommate to clean the kitchen, said, "She'll never know what I want unless I tell her.
Other useful messages are:
"I know I have the right to do this."
"I don't have to fear the worst will happen."
"I'll feel better about myself if I do it."
a)Now think of a situation that is giving you problems.
b)Think through how you might be stopping yourself from acting assertively. For instance, are you focusing on only the fearful consequences?

c)What kind of strong message can you tell yourself that will enable you to go ahead and act assertively?
d)Keep this message and use it from now on. You may want to write it down.

3. Conscious Relaxation

When we are active and exerting ourselves, we breathe from the chest. When we are completely relaxed we usually breathe from the abdomen. If we want to reduce our bodily tension, we can teach ourselves to deliberately breathe from the abdomen and to systematically relax all of our muscles.

It is not sufficient to read about deep breathing techniques, puff out our bellies a few times and breathe deeply while we are reading, and then expect to be able to relax at whim. The only way to understand what this relaxation feels like and to develop confidence in its effectiveness is to try it out repeatedly - to learn to do it.

If we are anticipating a difficult situation, we can practice conscious relaxation before the event; a friend of ours used it before job interviews. Obviously, we can't lie down on the floor and do a conscious relaxation of our entire body on the spot every time we are faced with an anxiety-producing situation calling for assertiveness. However, if we are in the habit of doing conscious relaxation and deep breathing, we can actually relax our bodies considerably by taking several deep abdominal breaths, releasing the tension as we exhale. This is so inconspicuous that no one else need be aware of what we are doing. We can simply pause for a few seconds, take several deep breaths, concentrate on releasing the tension, and stand or sit in a self-confident way, before we begin to speak.

It is important to practice conscious relaxation repeatedly. Through practice our bodies become trained to make the association between abdominal breathing and relaxation and it is much easier to relax at will with a few breaths.

Have a friend read the following conscious relaxation exercise aloud to you while you practice it. We suggest that the reader read slowly, except when the instructions say to tighten your muscles. (Afterward you can do the same for her) Or tape the exercise and play it back for yourself. After you have done it several times, you will probably be able to do it on your own.

Wear loose clothing and remove your shoes, interfering jewelry, glasses or contact lenses. Find a quiet place with soft lighting where you will be uninterrupted. Lie down on your back - on a rug or a mat or a firm bed. Get comfortable.

Now begin, Close your eyes ... Become aware of your body. Notice any tension in your body ... Adjust your position to become more comfortable ... Now become aware of your breathing ... Inhale slowly through your nose ... Exhale even more slowly through your mouth ... Inhale ... Exhale ... Find your own pace ... Let your breathing regulate itself ... Let yourself pause as long as is comfortable between breaths ... Exhale ...

Become aware of all the thoughts going through your head right now ... Picture a blackboard, and imagine that all your thoughts are written on a blackboard ... See yourself taking an imaginary eraser and slowly erasing the blackboard.

Now, focus on your body. Place your hand on your abdomen ... Exhale more slowly through your mouth, letting your abdomen relax ... Inhale ... Exhale ... Inhale ... Exhale ... As you exhale think of releasing all the tension from your body ... Inhale ... Exhale ... Let all the tension disappear.

Now continue your rhythmic breathing. Remove your hand from your abdomen and place it on the floor (or bed) Make sure you are comfortable. Keep this position throughout the rest of the exercise.

Now, tense your entire body slightly except for your neck and face. Hold your breath and clench your fists. Contract your muscles. Feel the tension in your shoulders, your arms, your hands, your chest ... back ... abdomen ... pelvis ... buttocks ... thighs ... calves ... feet ... and toes. Tense all your muscles ... Your back is arched. Your limbs are tensed. Now, exhale -- let go of all the tension and RELAX.

Breathe deeply from the abdomen ... Then slowly exhale ... Breathe deeply again and ... exhale.

Now, breathe in. Hold your breath and tense your muscles again. This time, tense them harder with a medium level of tension. Clench your fists. Contract all your muscles. Feel the tension in your shoulders, your arms, your hands, your chest, back, abdomen, pelvis, buttocks, thighs, feet , and toes. All your muscles feel tense. Your body is tight. Hold it! Now, exhale and relax all you muscles. Let go and let the tension flow out.

Breathe deeply from the abdomen ... and ... exhale ... Inhale ... Exhale ... Let all the tension leave your body ... Inhale ... Exhale...

Now ... inhale ... Hold your breath and contract your muscles as tightly as you can. Clench your fists. Feel the tension in your shoulders, your arms, hands, chest, back (your back is arched off the floor). Feel the tension in your abdomen, pelvis, buttocks, thighs, calves, feet, and toes. Tense all your muscles as tightly as you can. Your body is trembling with the tension ... Now, exhale ... Release your muscles and RELAX...

Inhale from the abdomen ... and ... exhale ... Inhale ... Exhale ...

All the tension is leaving your body. Inhale ... Exhale ... Inhale ... Exhale ... Let all distracting thoughts leave your mind. Just concentrate on your body.

Now focus your attention on your head. Be aware of the top of your head ... feel all the tension flowing out your head and forehead ... relax the upper part of your head ... let your head become completely relaxed. (Pause)

Become aware of your jaw ... let it go slack ... all the tension is leaving your jaw... your whole head.... Your eyes ... your face ... are relaxed ... Be aware of the relaxed feeling ... your head is without tension ... totally free ... (Pause)

Now concentrate on your neck ... Focus on it and let it relax ... Continue to breathe deeply ... continue to relax.

Now focus your attention on your shoulders ... Feel your shoulders relax... They don't have to support anything ... let all the tension flow out of them ... let your shoulders relax completely ... Continue to inhale and exhale ...

Concentrate now on your arms ... Be aware of their position and of all the tension flowing out of them ... let your arms relax. All the tension is flowing down your arms through your hands and your fingers ... right out through your finger tips. Feel your arms, your hands, and your fingers become totally relaxed ... Continue to breathe deeply ... Inhale ... Exhale ... Inhale ... Exhale ...

Now become aware of your back. The floor (or bed) is providing total support for your back ... your back can relax completely ... Let all the tension flow out of your back...

Now focus your attention on your chest ... let your chest and your rib cage relax totally ... Be aware of the relaxed feeling in your chest ... it is totally without tension ...

Be aware of your back being relaxed and free ... Continue to breathe in and exhale ... The whole upper part of your body is totally without tension ... Enjoy being aware of the relaxation of your upper body ... It is completely free of tension ... it is relaxed ...

Concentrate, now, on your lower back and your buttocks. Let them relax ... All the tension is flowing out ... Relax your lower back right to the tip of your spinal column. Relax your buttocks ... Continue to breathe deeply. Inhale ... Exhale ...

Become aware of your pelvis and your genitals. Focus your attention on your pelvis. Let your pelvis relax ... All the tension is leaving...
Now focus on your thighs ... feel them relaxing ... all the tension is leaving your thighs...

Now, your knees and calves. Your knees feel suspended ... they are without pressure ... relax your calves ... let them be totally at rest ... the tension is flowing out of your knees and your calves ... your legs are totally relaxed.

Focus on your ankles ... your ankles are without strain ... let them totally relax ... Continue to breathe deeply ... All the tension is gone from your legs and your ankles ...

Now become aware of your feet ... Much of the day your feet bear the weight of your body ... Now they are without pressure ... be aware of your arches ... of the balls of your fee ... your feet are relaxed ... let them float free, ... Be aware of your toes ... the last bit of tension in your body is flowing out through your toes... Let your toes completely relax... Continue to breathe evenly ... slowly... and deeply...

Your whole body is completely relaxed... Be aware of the feeling of peace and relaxation ... total relaxation. Enjoy the sensation of total relaxation ... total concentration on yourself.

Continue to breath deeply ... let yourself float ...
(Long pause)
When you feel like it, stretch, and slowly sit up.

When you've finished you're likely to feel a tingling sensation over your entire body. If you were able to relax totally you are probably aware of how different complete relaxation feels from our usual state of mild physical tension. If it was difficult to consciously relax each body part, we urge you to repeat it until it gets easier. Each time you do it, you will find it easier to relax. Practice often and regularly.

THE ASSERTION INVENTORY

Many people experience difficulty in handling interpersonal situations requiring them to assert themselves in some way, for example, turning down a request, asking a favor, giving someone a compliment, expression disapproval or approval, etc..

Go over the list and indicate after each item the probability or likelihood of your displaying the behavior if actually presented with the situation. For example, if you rarely apologize when you are at fault, you would mark a "4" after that item. Utilize the following scale to indicate response probability:

1. always do it
2. usually do it
3. do it about half the time
4. rarely do it
5. never do it

SITUATION	RESPONSE PROBABILITY
1. Turn down a request to borrow your car.	
2. Compliment a friend.	
3. Ask a favor of someone.	
4. Resist sales pressure.	
5. Apologize when you are at fault.	
6. Turn down a request for a meeting or date.	
7. Admit fear and request consideration.	
8. Tell a person you are intimiately involved with when he/she says or does something that bothers you	
9. Ask for a raise.	
10. Admit ignorance in some area.	
11. Turn down a request to borrow money.	
12. Ask personal questions.	
13. Turn off a talkative friend.	
14. Ask for constructive criticism.	
15. Initiate a conversation with a stranger	
16. Compliment a person your are romantically involved with or interest in.	
17. Request a meeting or a date with a person.	
18. Your initial request for a meeting is turned down and you ask the person again at a later time.	
19. Admit confusion about a point under discussion and ask for clarification.	
20. Apply for a Job.	
21. Ask when the you have offended someone.	

SITUATION | RESPONSE PROBABILITY

22. Tell someone that you like them. ____________________

23. Request expected service when such is not forthcoming, e.g., in a restaurant. ____________________

24. Discuss openly with the person his/her criticism of your behavior. ____________________

25. Return defective items, e.g., store or restaurant. ____________________

26. Express an opinion that differs from that of the person you are talking to. ____________________

27. Resist sexual overtures when you are not interested. ____________________

28. Tell the person when you feel he/she has done something that is unfair to you. ____________________

29. Accept a date. ____________________

30. Tell someone good news about yourself. ____________________

31. Resist pressure to drink. ____________________

32. Resist a significant person's unfair demand. ____________________

33. Quit a job. ____________________

34. Resist pressure to "turn on". ____________________

35. Discuss openly with the person his/her criticism of your work. ____________________

36. Request the return of borrowed items. ____________________

37. Receive compliments. ____________________

38. Continue to converse with someone who disagrees with you. ____________________

39. Tell a friend or someone with whom you work when he/se says or does something that bothers you. ____________________

40. Ask a person who is annoying you in a public situation to stop. ____________________

Lastly, please indicate the situations you would like to handle more assertively by placing a circle around the item number.

M-K ASSERTIVE-AGGRESSIVE INVENTORY

SCORE SHEET

	ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR	NON-ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR	AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR
TOWARDS THE BOSS	5. ______	11. ______	1. ______
	7. ______	14. ______	12. ______
	15. ______	22. ______	18. ______
	33. ______	28. ______	20. ______
	42. ______	47. ______	24. ______
	50. ______	49. ______	31. ______
TOTAL	______	TOTAL ______	TOTAL ______
TOWARDS ONE'S CO-WORKERS	13. ______	10. ______	23. ______
	17. ______	27. ______	35. ______
	19. ______	45. ______	39. ______
	29. ______	48. ______	46. ______
	37. ______	52. ______	51. ______
	43. ______	54. ______	53. ______
TOTAL	______	TOTAL ______	TOTAL ______
TOWARDS ONE'S SUBORDINATES	2. ______	8. ______	3. ______
	4. ______	25. ______	6. ______
	21. ______	32. ______	9. ______
	26. ______	40. ______	16. ______
	34. ______	41. ______	30. ______
	38. ______	44. ______	36. ______
TOTAL	______	TOTAL ______	TOTAL ______

16 - 24	HIGH
8 - 16	MODERATE
1 - 8	LOW

Rating Instructions

Please answer the questions by rating each statement on a scale of 0 to 4. Place your ranking on the left side of the appropriate statement.

Remember, your answer should reflect how you generally express yourself in a variety of situations.

If a particular situation does not apply to you, answer as you think you would respond in that situation. Your answer should not reflect how you feel you "ought to act" or how you would "like to act".

Do not deliberate over any individual statement. Please work quickly. Your first response to the statements is probably you most accurate one. Most people finish in about fifteen minutes.

RATING SCALE

Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never or Rarely
(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)

________ 1. I complain to others about the ineptness of my boss.

________ 2. If a subordinate makes a statement that I consider untrue, I question him/her out loud.

________ 3. I feel good after I vent my anger when I tell off a subordinate when he/she really messes up a simple job.

________ 4. I am quick to tell a co-worker whenever he/she has done something that makes my job easier.

________ 5. If my boss ignores a request, I ask until I get an answer.

________ 6. When a subordinates does something on the job that I don't like, I resort to name calling.

________ 7. I feel free to initiate a discussion with my boss about my performance on the job.

________ 8. I find it difficult to ask a subordinate to do a favor for me.

________ 9. I complain to others about the ineptness of subordinates.

________ 10. I find it difficult to ask a co-worker to do a favor for me.

Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never or Rarely
(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)

________ 11. I have trouble asking for time off, even if it is justified.

________ 12. I find myself grumbling about my boss' behavior.

________ 13. If a co-worker makes a remark that I don't really understand but think might be an insult, I question him/her about the meaning.

________ 14. I have trouble thinking of what to say when my boss compliments me on a good job.

________ 15. I tell my boss when he/she does something on the job that in my judgement is an error.

________ 16. I make fun of subordinates to others.

________ 17. If a co-worker ignores a request, I ask again until I get an answer.

________ 18. I feel good after I vent my anger by telling off the boss when he/she really messes up a simple situation.

________ 19. I tell subordinates when they do something on the job that is an error in my judgement.

________ 20. When something goes wrong on the job, I am quick to blame the boss.

________ 21. If a group of subordinates confronts me on an issue, I stand firm on my position.

________ 22. I become nervous when I talk to my boss about a problem.

________ 23. I make fun of my co-workers to others.

________ 24. When my boss does something on the job that I don't like, I resort to name calling.

________ 25. I find myself grumbling about my co-workers'behavior.

________ 26. I feel free to initiate a discussion with subordinates about their performance on the job.

________ 27. I have difficulty saying no when a co-worker makes what I consider to be an unreasonable request.

Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never or Rarely
(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)

________ 28. I find it difficult to ask my boss to do a favor for me.

________ 29. If a co-worker makes a statement that I consider to be untrue, I question him/her out loud.

________ 30. When something goes wrong on the job, I am quick to blame a subordinate.

________ 31. I make fun of my boss to others.

________ 32. I avoid speaking up when a subordinate has done something that makes my job harder.

________ 33. If my boss makes a statement that I consider untrue, I question him/her out loud.

________ 34. If a subordinate ignores a request, I ask again until I get an answer.

________ 35. When something goes wrong on the job, I am quick to blame a co-worker.

________ 36. I find myself shouting at a subordinate.

________ 37. I tell a co-worker when he/she has done something on the job that in my judgement is an error.

________ 38. If a subordinate makes a remark that I don't really understand but think might be an insult, I question her/him about the meaning.

________ 39. I complain to others about the ineptness of co-workers.

________ 40. I have difficulty saying no when a subordinate makes what I consider an unreasonable request.

________ 41. I become nervous when I talk to a subordinate about a problem.

________ 42. If a boss makes a remark to me that I don't really understand but I think might be an insult, I question her/him about the meaning.

________ 43. I feel free to initiate a discussion with co-workers about their performance on a joint program.

Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never or Rarely
(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)

________ 44. I grant subordinates requests for time off, even when it is not justified.

________ 45. I avoid saying something when a co-worker has done something that makes my job harder.

________ 46. I find myself shouting at a co-worker.

________ 47. I avoid saying something when my boss has done something that makes my job harder.

________ 48. I have trouble thinking of what to say when a co-worker compliments me on a good job.

________ 49. I have difficulty saying no when my boss makes what I consider an unreasonable request.

________ 50. I am quick to tell my boss whenever he/she has done something that makes my job easier.

________ 51. I feel good after I vent my anger by telling off a co-worker when he/she really messes up a simple job.

________ 52. I become nervous when I talk to a co-worker about a problem.

________ 53. When a co-worker does something on the job that I don't like, I resort to name calling.

________ 54. When co-workers confront me regarding my performance, I refuse to listen.

MODULE #6 - HOMEWORK

1. Preparing for self-assertion (work sheet).

2. Exercise sheet - Rational - Emotive Imagery.

3. Observe the non-verbal behavior of three other persons during the week.

4. On three occasions, pay attention to your own non-verbal behaviors and identify clearly those engaging behaviors you like.

5. Practice several times different techniques to reduce anxiety during the week.

6. List ten situations that made you tense.

POSITIVE SELF-STATEMENTS

Preparing for Self-assertion

No negative statements. I'm just going to express my feelings.
My purpose here is not to be liked and approved of by everyone.
It isn't awful to make a mistake.
I'm not going to apologize for where I am now.
Stop catastrophizing. I'm doing them a favor by letting them know what I feel.

Handling an Assertive Encounter

I'll go at my own rate. I can back up if I'm feeling overwhelmed.
I have a perfect right to express my feelings.
Everyone doesn't have to agree with me for me to be okay.
It's okay to feel nervous. That's part of entering new territory.
There is no perfect way of saying this.
I don't have to think of something to say if I just express my feelings. If my mind goes blank, it's okay to say, "My mind has just gone blank."

Giving Yourself Credit

I'm really glad that I was honest.
I'm really pleased. That was hard for me to say.
I'm still feeling a little shaky, but I did it. I deserve a lot of credit.
I was terrific.
Hey, the roof didn't fall in. I'm getting better every time.
They didn't respond as I would have liked, but that's not important. The important thing is that I asserted myself.

Taken from Self Assertion: A Guide to Becoming Adrogynous

Exercise in Rational-Emotive imagery and techniques for changing self-defeating imagery and auditory tape loops.

1. Identify an irrational belief that has prevented you from asserting yourself. Recall the situation that belief comes from or imagine a future situation where this belief could limit your behavior.

2. Identify whether it is visual image or an auditory tape loop that supports your irrational belief. Do you see things not turning out the way you would like them to or do you tell yourself things that prevent you from getting the outcome that you want?

3. Discover what internal resource, that is, what rational capability you would need for the imagined or remembered situation to have a satisfactory outcome for you. For example, would the resource of feeling confident, relaxed, or curious change the situation for you. When you have found what internal resource or rational capability would have helped you achieve the outcome you want then recall as carefully as you can, the last time you experienced that internal resource. For example, remember the last time you felt really confident. Once again feel the feelings of confidence and see yourself looking confident. Listen to how your voice sounds. Recall the experience of confidence as totally as you can.

4. Return to the original situation in which you were able to assert yourself. This time allow yourself to experience it with the new resource you have. How does this change the situation for you? If you do not get a satisfactory outcome then find out what other resource you would need and go through steps 1 to 4 until you get a satisfactory outcome.

INDEX OF MATERIALS INCLUDED

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PROTECTIVE SKILLS

1. BROKEN RECORD:	Continuous repetition of the clear statement of the assertor's feeling or main point. No other issues are attended to in the conversation. eg. No free information, no side issues, don't use maybe, sort of.
2. SELECTIVE RESPONDING:	Not replying to unfair, abusive destructive, guilt-producing or unjust statements. The assertor first makes a clear and honest communication saying she/he will not respond to these things, and then ignores them (both verbally and non-verbally) until the other person stops.
3. TIME-OUT:	Tell the other person you're going out for a specific length of time, and will discuss the issue when you return. Follow through with this contract.
4. DISARMING ANGER:	Negotiate for a cooling-off period. Say something like "I'll talk about whatever you want, but first calm down." This may have to be repeated a couple of times.
5. SORTING ISSUES:	Deal with only one issue at a time to avoid confusion, and don't respond to name-calling (and don't use it either).
6. ASSERTIVE APOLOGIES:	The words "I'm sorry" often seem to be used for self-abuse and apologizing for living. Adopt a NO I'm sorry Rule. If apologies are necessary, apologize for your behavior without using the words "I'm sorry". Say something like "You're right, that wasn't a helpful thing to do. I won't do it again."

NOT RECOMMENDED

1. Fogging

2. Critical Inquiry.

PRACTICE EXERCISE

1. Your mother-in-law, who comes to visit frequently, accuses you of not caring for your husband and family because you spend time away from home working for different community organizations. Although you care for her, you do not like her constant nagging, and you want to ask her to stop it. Use the Selective Responding Technique.
2. You are the only woman at a meeting of ten people. One of the men, a big, burly, bully-type of man, tells you to take the minutes, and to be the secretary. You want to be the treasurer, and your job is to say no to his demands, and to negotiate for the other position. Use the Broken Record Technique for this.
3. You have a meeting to go to, and your husband is pointedly ignoring you when you hint that you want him to baby-sit the children. Ask him directly to baby-sit, using "I" messages, and the Broken Record Technique.
4. A persistent salesman, who handles a large line of products that you customarily buy, is insisting that you buy a product that you don't really want, even though it could be useful on your farm. Your goal here is to say no to him about the one product, using the Broken Record Technique, while not alienating him so you can still take advantage of his "deals in the future".
5. Your husband is scolding you because you have bought a dress that he considers frivolous. He accuses you of being foolish with money, and has become very angry. To prove his point about how foolish you are, he has just dragged in the issue of how much time you spend going to meetings. Use the techniques of Sorting Issues, and Selective Responding to deal with this situation.

PROTECTIVE SKILLS

Risks of Protective Skills

One of the most controversial issues in assertion training is the use of specific structured technique for situations where the individual is being unfairly criticized, manipulated, pressured, or taken advantage of by someone else. The concerns about teaching and using these various protective skills are these:

> The individual can overuse these verbal techniques to the disadvantage of the assertor and recipient - in both superficial and intimate relationships.
>
> These structured techniques, if used alone, will not foster closer relationships between individuals.
>
> Being the recipient of some of these protective techniques can be very frustrating.

> If the assertor and the recipient do not work out a more equitable communication system and understand, the communication and the relationship between the individuals may cease to exist as a result of using these techniques.
>
> It is debatable as to what constitutes unfair criticism, pressure, manipulation, etc. By quickly turning to these procedures, the individual may become so defensive that he will not hear or respond to appropriate messages of concern.

To some extent, each of these concerns is valid; consequently, these protective techniques must be taught with a considerable amount of caution and monitoring on the part of the trainer.

OPEN COMMUNICATION

Whenever one feels that he is being treated unfairly or unjustly, a clear, honest statement of that fact is the single most assertive act a person can make. The clear, honest statement of one's needs or feelings in a relationship is the common denominator throughout all of the protective as well as the social approach procedures. It has been our experience that in most situations, an honest, clearly worded statement will be an effective and sufficient assertion. When clients ask us, "What do I say in situation X?" our reply is "What do you feel about X?" Their answer is usually the assertive communication that we encourage them to take in the situation. In our personal lives, a single, clear statement of our feelings has been the most frequently used assertive skill. As assertion trainers, we found that facilitating clients in simply stating their feelings in any given situation consumes the majority of our efforts.

What about those individuals who do not know what they want or feel? People caught in this "existential crisis" are usually more difficult to train to be assertive. Assertion training alone would probably not serve their needs. However, as an assertive trainer, you must be able to discriminate between those individuals who are truly confused about their needs and those individuals who are so non-assertive that they do not feel they have a right to their values or feelings. The latter group knows what they like and dislike, but they cannot verbalize this to others. Consequently, training for this latter group involves teaching them to express feelings and needs which they have suppressed in the past.

OCCASIONS FOR PROTECTIVE SKILLS

Let us assume for a moment that somewhere in this vast society of ours there is a husband who does not respect his wife's self-esteem and proceeds to repeatedly call her names. Let us also assume that the wife, on several occasions has clearly stated to her husband, "I feel your name-calling is very unfair to me, and I want you to stop doing this." If the husband hears her assertive response and stops, fine; but what if he disregards her message and continues the name-calling? Should she begin calling him names back? Should she start crying? Should she throw something at him? Should she pack up and leave the house?

As another example, what if a door-to-door salesperson continues to high pressure you after you have clearly and assertively stated that you are not interested in buying the person's product? Do you slam the door in the individuals face? Do you make up a phony excuse? What do you do if the salesperson is already in your house? How do you handle the situation if the salesperson is a neighbor whom you know?

As a third example, how do you respond to a boss, fellow employee, relative, or friend who screams and intensely criticizes you even after you have asked this person to stop for a moment and cool off? Do you scream or criticize back? Do you attack the person physically? Do you break down and cry or become overly apologetic even before you know the issue?

There are a number of situations like these where we feel it is both appropriate and necessary to teach the client some protective skills. These are very powerful techniques which can cause a temporary or permanent break in the communication or the relationship itself. Consequently, they should only be used after the honest communication has failed and the other person persists in victimizing, not listening, or not respecting the client.

To some, the very idea of teaching an individual to be defensive is unacceptable. The connotation conjures up the image of an uncompromising and hostile person. However, it is important to remember that we all have and need some defenses at various times in order to survive physically and emotionally. Non-assertive individuals also have defenses. The defense may be passivity or withdrawal, it may involve the avoidance of contact with others, or the defense may be aggression. These behavior patterns do protect non-assertive aggressive individuals, otherwise they would not be repeated over and over again.

The difficulty is that these behavior patterns are not adaptive because these individuals may end up losing rights, friends, or personal freedom. A passive, non-assertive person is likely to have many of his needs go unsatisfied and, as a result, may be depressed with a poor self-image. The aggressive individual may get more material needs met, but the probabilities are also higher that he will not have many close and intimate friends. Hopefully, then, there are better defenses available. Another reason for teaching some protective skills stems from our experience that it is very difficult to train and motivate individuals to attempt the social approach behaviors if they are not able to also defend themselves when appropriate. In order to stick your neck out and risk being involved with people, you must also feel like you can protect yourself should someone try to hurt you.

The defensive techniques that we teach are verbal defenses which are intended to protect the individual but not insulate him from feedback and communication; one must learn to discriminate when criticism is constructive and when it is destructive. One must learn to discriminate when an angry person is angry with reason and when the anger is primarily aggressive and destructive. In superficial relationships such as a customer salesman relationship, these decisions may be fairly easy. If the customer does not want to buy a product, he has a right not to do so. If a salesperson attempts to talk the customer out of his position after the individual has clearly stated a disinterest, a defensive technique may be appropriate to use. In personal and intimate relationships, these discriminations are more difficult to make and may initially require constant monitoring by the assertion trainer.

It is a controversial issue whether it is appropriate or constructive to give people "programmed" ways to responding to intimates when there is friction between them. We know that it is possible to train individuals to effectively shield themselves from the unfair criticisms of another. However, if these techniques are used in all situation, whether the criticism is just or unfair, the individual can become so tightly defended that no one will be able to affect the person. Closer relationships will gradually cease to exist, and the individual will perhaps remain more isolated than before. This is a real danger. Consequently, we will once again emphasize that these protective skills are to be used only as a last resort and only after other more open, positive efforts have failed.

TERMINATING PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Once the decision is made to use a protective technique, the individual also has the responsibility to listen for changes in the communication. If the unjust interaction is terminated, then the assertive individual should immediately cease his use of the defensive technique and resume more open communication. On the other hand, if the unjust interaction is again resumed, the defensive technique should also be repeated. Knowing when to start and when to continue using the technique is as crucial as knowing how to use it. Our experience has been that in most instances this start-stop procedure is necessary before a more equitable communication system is established. In the case of a nag, the nagging person does not immediately cease nagging. Instead the process fluctuates where the nagging ceases for awhile, then resumes, and then ceases again later. During these lulls, we feel that the honest communication should be repeated.

The primary goal in the use of these techniques is to interrupt a destructive and unjust interaction pattern, replacing it with a fair and mutually respectful communication. In our assertion groups, we encourage our clients to use negotiation and contracting as a primary tool for this. Once the destructive interaction is terminated, both parties can negotiate for a mutually satisfactory contract. In a customer salesman relationship that may mean, as the assertor, you do not buy the product but agree to take the individual's business card for future reference. In an intimate relationship, the negotiation and contracting is usually more complex, but both parties can strive to give the other person as much as possible without negotiating away individual values, rights, and dignity.

CONSEQUENCES OF TEACHING PROTECTIVE SKILLS

When these protective skills are first employed, the recipient of the interaction - the person who is doing the nagging, criticizing, pressuring - is likely to feel some frustration in not being able to affect the individual in the desired manner; consequently, the communication will probably stop. In most cases, this break in the communication system is only a temporary one and resolves itself in a more equitable interaction when the other person recognizes that the assertor is able to stand up for his rights and protect himself.

PROTECTION ONE: BROKEN RECORD

Of the various protective techniques used, the broken record is the most basic. The broken record can be used by itself, or as a component of several of the other techniques to follow. In addition to being potentially useful in situations where a person is defending himself from being nagged, criticized, or pressured, the broken record can also be used in situations where the assertor is requesting something for himself.

The broken record is essentially the continuous repetition of the clear statement of the assertor's feeling or main point. No other issues are attended to in the conversation other than the point being made by the assertor. In effect, the individual sounds like a "broken record," repeating over and over again his position in as concise a statement as possible. In many conversations, side issues are brought in by the other individual to distract or anger the person. To the point where all clarity of the main point is lost. With the use of the broken record, one point is covered at a time and all side issues are saved for later discussions.

In superficial relationship such as customer-salesperson interaction, responding to the salesperson's side issues and questions gives the salesperson (S) more information to use toward selling the product to the customer (C).

S: I would like to show you some great magazines which I am selling.
C: No thank you, I'm not interested in buying any magazines today.
S: Do you have any children?

C: Yes.
S: Well, we have some very educational and enjoyable children's magazines to offer.
C: They have all the magazines they need.
S: As an interested parent you could provide them with magazines that would increase their motivation to learn. How are they doing in school?
C: They are doing pretty well in school except for math.

At this point the salesperson is well on the way to controlling the conversation and, perhaps, the outcome of the interaction. By focusing on the customer's children, the salesperson may be able to arouse enough guilt or interest to make a sale. If the customer's children are having some difficulty in school, or if the salesperson can get the potential customer to make other disclosures about himself or his family, then the salesperson will be more likely to make a sale. Let us take this conversation again, only this time we will utilize the protective shield of the broken record after the clear, honest communication does not terminate the interaction.

S: I would like to show you some great magazines which I am selling.
C: No thank you, I am not interested in buying any magazines today. (Honest and clear communication.)
S: We really have some great magazines to offer.
C: That may be quite true, but I have all the magazines I want to read. (Honest and clear communication.)
S: Do you have any children?
C: The point is I'm not interested in buying any magazines today. (Broken record.)
S: Well then, is your wife home? She may be interested.
C: I don't want any magazines. (Broken record)
S: Wouldn't you like her to make her own choice on that sir?
C: I don't want any magazines. (Broken record)
NOTE: The customer is choosing not to answer the questions. There is nothing blazed in the sky that says we have to answer all questions asked of us.
S: Sir, have I told you that one-half of the profits in these sales go to medical research. Aren't you concerned about your health or the future health of your children?
C: The point is I'm not interested in any magazines. (Broken record.)
S: OK, OK. Would you at least take this brochure and think about it?
C: Yes, I will take the brochure. (Negotiated ending.)
S: Thank you.
C: You're welcome.

The conversation here was quite different from the previous interaction. With the broken record, no free information was given nor were side issues attended to. The customer's interest in medical research was irrelevant to his interest in not purchasing magazines.

The salesperson in this situation did not attend to the original clear statement of the customer, and it was necessary to repeat the statement until the salesperson did finally get the message. Notice that towards the end of the interaction, the salesperson tried to negotiate for something in his behalf - taking the brochure - which the customer accepted. The customer, in this case, may choose to think about buying magazines at a later date or may immediately discard the brochure. However it was an attempt to leave the salesperson feeling like he did accomplish something with his potential customer.

In the previous example, the broken record was being used where the assertor was refusing or saying "No" to someone. This technique can also be effectively and appropriately used in situations where the assertor is making a request. The procedure is the same as before. the assertor returns the conversation to the main point whenever irrelevant issues are introduced or he is being ignored. The person using the broken record does not necessarily repeat the same sentence over and over again. As long as the conversation is on the relevant topic, there is no reason to restate the original sentence. If, on the other hand, a side issue is brought up, the original sentence stating one's position is then repeated.

Because conversation continues and negotiation and contracting are possible using this technique, the other person is not as likely to become frustrated. Also, this technique is not necessarily intended to end a conversation as some of the other protective techniques are designed to do. In the following example, our mythical hero, Sherwin (S), will attempt to get our mythical villain, Julio (J), to commit himself to an important writing deadline using the broken record.

S: Hi, I want to talk to you about setting a deadline for the writing of our book. (Clear and honest communication.)
J: Sherwin, it's the weekend; let's go sailing.
S: Julio, we need to set a deadline date. (Broken record)
J: Oh, Sherwin, you always nag, nag, nag.
S: Let's set a date for our deadline and then we can talk about other things. (Broken record and negotiation offer).
J: I haven't got my appointment book.
S: Where is it at?
J: Downstairs in the car.
S: Please go get it so we can finish this up. (Broken record)
J: I'll do it later.
S: Julio we have been putting this off for weeks now. Please go get your appointment book so we can set a deadline. (Broken record)
J: OK, I'll go get it. Then can we talk about sailing?
S: Sure, after we agree on some writing time. (Contract)
J: I'll be back in a moment. (Leaves to get his appointment book.)

The conversation here did continue, and neither party attempted to terminate the interaction without reaching an agreement. The negotiation and contracting began with both of them agreeing to consider sailing after the deadline was set. When Julio returned from the car a deadline date may have been easily agreed upon, or Sherwin may have had to resort to the broken record throughout the conversation in order to come to an agreement.

In using the broken record and the other protective skills to follow, there are two important points to remember. First of all, if you are defending yourself using one of these techniques, it may be necessary to stay with the technique for several responses until the other individual gets tired and begins to back off. Although you may be able to stop a negative interaction with just one broken record response, the likelihood is that you will need to use this protective shield at least three times in succession before the other person stops. In some cases you will need more than three responses; consequently, we have our clients practice giving eight to twelve responses in order to over-learn this defensive stance. In most cases, however, about three responses will do it. As an example, one large encyclopedia company instructs its door-to-door salespeople to break off the sales pitch if the potential customer say "No" three times without giving any extra information to work on.

Secondly, if you are asking for some need of yours to be filled (e.g., asking someone next to you to put out a cigarette that is bothering you), you must be prepared to make the request at least two times. It is amazing how many requests are turned down on asking the first time and then agreed to on the second request. It is recognized that just making the request is a very important first step for a non-assertive individual and that this alone can do much to enhance his self image and dignity. However, as the individual becomes more confident in his assertive skills, further encouragement should be given to make the request at least a second time before assuming that nothing will be done by the other person.

PROTECTION TWO: SELECTIVE IGNORING

Selective ignoring is the discriminatory attending and non-attending to specific content from another individual. That is, the assertor does not reply to unfair or abusive interactions, but instead replies only to statements that are not destructive, guilt-producing, or unjust. Not only does the assertor remain totally silent through the unfair interactions, but his non-verbal cues must also be controlled. Head-nodding in particular is a reinforcing, non-verbal cue to a speaker. Those who have had public speaking experience will recall how comfortable it is to speak to an audience that is smiling and head-nodding in approval. The rationale for the effectiveness of this technique is that the assertor extinguishes the responses of the other person.

That is, the assertor no longer resists the interaction, but simply removes the reinforcement. This technique is relatively easy to use under high anxiety states in that it requires no defensive speech. However, the effectiveness of the technique involves sophisticated discriminations of when to attend and when not to attend to specific information. The assertor does try to continue an ongoing conversation, but responds selectively to the information given.

When training this skill in our groups, we usually begin with a simulated phone conversation. The role-playing clients sit back-to-back and speak through an imaginary phone. The seating arrangements and the phone conversation are used to eliminate non-verbal cues. The clients can then concentrate entirely on the verbal discriminations. After clients have become proficient with the phone conversation arrangement, then face-to-face conversations are attempted. Visual aids such as a mirror or videotape can be extremely helpful here in aiding the client to control body movements.

As an example of where a selective ignoring procedure can be effectively used, imagine a situation where a daughter (D) is getting a phone call from a guilt-producing and nagging mother (M).

D: Hello.
M: Hi, precious, how are you?
D: Oh, hi Mom. I'm fine, how are you?
M: Now that you ask, I am not very good.
D: Oh, that's too bad, what's the matter?
M: You never call us anymore now that you are out living on your own. I guess you are just too busy for your parents.
D: Mom, you know I still love you and Dad very much. However, with working, going to school, and trying to pay all of my own expenses, calling you long distance more than once a week is just too much for me. (Clear and honest communication).
M: Are you saying we are not worth the price of a phone call or that you cannot take a couple of minutes to call us every other day? After all, there is no one left in the house anymore except Dad and me.
D: Mother, I really don't want to continue talking like this. I feel that you are unfairly criticizing me again, and when conversations like this continue, we only end up arguing. I am not going to respond to your criticisms if you continue. How's Dad? (Honest communication with an alternative topic being offered).
M: I only criticize you for your own good. After all, I wouldn't expect some of those people you call your friends to say anything.
D: (Silence)
M: Are you still dating that bum Pete?
D: (Silence)

M: I asked if you were still dating that bum Pete?
D: (Silence)
M: Hello, are you still there?
D: Yes, Mother, I am still here.
M: Why aren't you answering me then?
D: Mom, I said I do not like the constant criticism. I feel that I am old enough to make decisions and choices as to whom I date. (Clear and honest communication)
M: Well, if that were true, you would be married by now. After all, how many girls are still unmarried and going to school at the age of thirty-one?
D: (Silence)
M: Are you silent because you do not have a good answer to that question?
D: (Silence)
M: Well, if you are not going to answer my questions, what is there left to talk about? (Offer of negotiation)
D: Would you like to hear about my promotion at work? (Return offer)
M: Oh, you got a promotion. Tell me about it (Acceptance)

Depending upon the mother's response, it may be necessary for the daughter to give a number of silences (i.e, selective ignoring) before a more pleasant topic of conversation ensues. If the nagging interaction pattern between the mother and daughter is a longstanding one, a single phone conversation using the selective ignoring procedure will probably not change the situation very much. The next time mother calls, the old pattern will probably repeat itself. In time, however, some permanent change may occur: The mother will continue talking with the daughter, but will be much less critical. However, an immediate change which can occur is that the daughter need not either agree or argue with everything the mother says. By not responding to all of the other's questions and criticisms, the daughter can enjoy some relief from the stressful, guilt-producing conversation.

The selective ignoring technique (or, for that matter any of the other defensive techniques) does not guarantee a change in the other person's behavior, even though this is often the result. These techniques are intended to protect the recipient of an unjust interaction. A high pressure salesperson, for example, may remain a high pressure salesperson; he simply will not be able to sell to more assertive clients.

PROTECTION THREE: DISARMING ANGER

Disarming anger can be an extremely useful protective technique - in some cases, it may even save the person's life. This technique involves an honest contract offered by the assertor to another individual who is exhibiting high amounts of anger and who may, in fact, be bordering on physical violence. The contract that the assertor tries to work out is an agreement stating that the assertor will talk about whatever issue the other person wants, but only after some of his anger dissipates. Essentially, this is a negotiation for a cooling off period so that both parties can think more clearly and hopefully resolve the issue at hand. This contract is offered whether or not the accusations being made are true or false. Even if the accusations are true and the assertor does eventually apologize, there is no reason why this individual should be made to look or feel like a worthless, stupid human being in the process (or be physically assaulted). As part of the technique, the assertor does not reply to name-calling or other side issues. The assertor also does not escalate the interaction by screaming back. In effect, he uses a broken record offering the contract, "I will talk about whatever you want, but first calm down" In this case the assertor must be able to sit patiently through the individual's initial burst of anger. (In extreme cases when one's physical safety is at stake, getting away from the situation for awhile may be a wiser choice if this is possible.) It is also important that the assertor is able to appear reasonably relaxed throughout this part of the interaction; consequently, as part of the training procedure, it may be necessary to desensitize the client to screaming as well as to the anger in the screaming.

Disarming anger is not intended to negate or invalidate the other individual's anger. The intention is to use the technique in order to facilitate communication - not to terminate it. We feel that whenever a person's anger is very high his ability to list and incorporate new information is diminished. Trying to talk with such an angry person can be frustrating, useless, and risky. If some technique is not used here, the danger exists that both individuals will become extremely angry - possibly to the point where verbal or physical abuse is escalated. Although some anger and a raised voice may be very appropriate at times, we believe that people have the right not to be abused by extreme anger regardless of the reason: The intent of this technique is to disarm extreme, unreasonable anger. Although many constructive communications can be made in anger (Bach & Wyden, 1968), for this to occur the fighting must be "fair," where communication is honest, direct, and specific; where name calling is eliminated; where issues are not stored; and where the ultimate aim is to clear the air rather than to emerge as the "winner."

Disarming anger can be a useful addition to a person's ability to cope with other people. As an example of this technique, imagine there is an angry, irrational boss (B) screaming at our mild-mannered assertor named Tim (T).

B: (Screaming) Tim, you did it again. You are so stupid. When are you going to learn to get your paperwork done on time? Now I'm in trouble because you didn't do your job.

T: You are really angry. I'm not sure what paperwork you're talking about. Why don't you sit down so we can talk about it (Clear and honest communication)

B: Talk about it! I'm not sure you're smart enough to listen to a simple sentence in english. Now, damn it, I want you to do your work.

T: (Calmly) As I said, I want to talk to you about all this, but I really don't like to be screamed at. Sit down and let's try to talk about it calmly. (Clear and honest communication.)

B: I am calm, you idiot! Can't you do anything right?

T: I would like to talk with you about it, but only if we can go over it calmly. I really get uncomortable with your screaming (Technique begins here)

B: I am surprised an idiot like you is capable of having any feelings.

T: I will be willing to talk to you about the paperwork if you will sit down and stop screaming?

B: What if I don't want to stop screaming?

T: Then let's talk about this whole matter later today when you are not so angry. I want to get this thing settled too, but only if you are not screaming at me (Negotiation offer.)

B: I want to settle this thing now.

T: Then please sit down and stop screaming so we can do this.

B: OK. I'm sitting and I am not screaming. Why didn't you do your work?

At this point it appears that Tim has managed to disarm some of the boss' anger. The boss still has to communicate what paperwork Tim did not do, and Tim still has to account for his actions. It could be that the work actually was done, but trying to discuss the matter while the anger is so intense would be very difficult. However, once the boss is willing to sit down and talk about the matter more calmly, there is a greater likelihood that the situation can be discussed and, hopefully, resolved. Also note that in the above interaction, Tim chose not to take issue with the name-calling, but instead focused his attention on the boss' anger and screaming. At a later time when the boss is not as enraged, it may be quite appropriate for Tim to communicate that name-calling tends to hamper his relationship with the boss

PROTECTION FOUR: SORTING ISSUES

Occasionally, in the course of an interaction, more than one message or issue will become sandwiched together. Unless these issues or messages are sorted out and dealt with separately, the individual may begin to feel confused, anxious, and guilty. Consequently, it is to the assertor's and the recipient's advantage to deal with these different issues separately. Consider the following interaction between Bonnie (B) and Dorothy (D).

B: Dorothy, my car is in the garage again. Will you drive me into Beverely Hills tomorrow so that I can visit my cousin?

D: Normally, I would be glad to drive you, but I have already made plans to go on a picnic tomorrow with the family. (Clear and honest communication)

B: Dorothy, I don't ask you for favor very often.

D: I realize that, Bonnie, but I just will not be able to make it tomorrow. How about my taking you next week? (Negotiation)

B: By then I will probably have my own car back and will not need you. I though you were a friend I could count on for help.

D: Bonnie, I hope I am still your friend, and that I can help you at times. However, I will not be able to drive you into Beverly Hills tomorrow.

B: If I were really your friend, then you would take me.

D: Again, I do consider you my friend, Bonnie, but I think the issue here is whether or not I will be able to drive you into Beverly Hills tomorrow.

An attempt was made to sort the issue of friendship from being available as a driver. Often times, when two or more issues are sandwiched together and are not properly sorted, the individual goes away feeling guilty or anxious. By attempting to sort the various issues at hand, the assertor is better able to discriminate just what is being asked or implied by the other individual so that he can then formulate an appropriate response without leaving things unresolved or "up in the air."

Sorting issues is a more complex procedure to practice because more verbal response may be required than with some of the other techniques. Situations that can benefit from this procedure typically occur less frequently, and the sandwiching of different issues may be more subtle than overt criticism, nagging, or anger: "If you loved me, then you would ....." "Don't you care about this job? Why is it you.... " However, when the need does arise for sorting issues, we have found this procedure to be very useful.

PROTECTION FIVE: GUILT REDUCTION AND THE NO "I'M SORRY" RULE

We approach the reduction of personal guilt from both a didactic and behavioral direction. Guilt is a frequently reported feeling by many of the people with whom we work. It is true that, during the course of our lives, we become dependent upon a number of other individuals in order to satisfy many of our physical and emotional needs. As children, we are dependent upon our parents or on some other adult for our food, shelter, and attention. As adolescents we become dependent upon our peers for approval. As adults we may be dependent upon others for love, support, physical safety, or our jobs. It is little wonder then that when we go against the wishes of these "significant others" who are satisfying some of our basic needs we begin to feel uncomfortable. In a sense, we have a responsibility to others. But we also have a responsibility to ourselves. Our responsibility to others involves being open and honest without violating their dignity; it does not include always pleasing them.

With individuals who are unnecessarily experiencing guilt, we make every supportive comment we can think of in order for them to find some strength and responsibility that lies within them: The strength to experience new things and grow, the strength to express their feelings, the strength to do things in a manner which they feel is best for them and which does not violate the rights (but not necessarily the wishes) of others, and the responsibility to accept this strength and freedom as theirs and theirs alone. Individuals who are experiencing high amounts of guilt need support to validate that they are meaningful human beings who are entitled to certain rights and needs of their own, even when these rights and needs apparently conflict with the desires of some other significant person in their lives. Hopefully, this support can be found in every assertion training group.

In addition to this verbal support, we utilize a No "I'm Sorry" Rule in our assertion training groups. This rule states that no one, including trainer and aggressive clients, can use the specific words "I'm sorry" during the group period.

Individuals with undue amount of guilt often find themselves telling others that they are sorry for doing or not doing something. Frequently they do not stop to consider the possibility that their actions may have been appropriate in the situation or that nothing wrong was really done to merit an "I'm sorry" response. Instead, they say "I'm sorry" almost automatically.

If the "I'm sorry" statement is made during the session, it is pointed out to the individual, and he is asked to rephrase the statement without using these words. In cases where the individual feels there is no reason to apologize for his actions, he is encouraged, and coached if necessary, to repeat the statement without using the words "I'm sorry." If, in fact, the individual does feel an apology of some sort is in order, he is asked to rephrase the response and give an apology without using the specific words "I'm sorry." For example, let's assume that one of the clients (C) comes in twenty minutes late to the group therapy session and the trainer (T) reacts in the following way.

T: You are late.
C: Yes, I know. I'm sorry
T: I feel it is very important that we all start these sessions on time -- together.
C: I said I am sorry.

If this situation did occur, the client would be asked if he felt there was a good reason for being late. If the answer was "No," and if the client felt an apology was in order, he might be coached to handle the situation by admitting his error but without compromising his own dignity.

T: You are late.
C: Yes, I know. I apologize for being late, but I did not realize how late it was when I left the house.
T: I do not like excuses. I feel it is very important that we all start these sessions on time -- together.
C: It was not intended as an excuse. I was just telling you what happened. I will try to be here on time next week.

If, on the other hand, the client felt there was a good reason for being late, he would be coached to handle the situation differently. For example:

T: You are late.
C: Yes, I know. I had something come up which was very important and which I felt I had to attend to before I came here.
NOTE: The person need not go into the reason for being late unless he wishes to do so.
T: Isn't the group important to you? Besides, you kept the rest of us waiting.
C: Yes the group is important to me, and my intent was not to keep the rest of the group waiting; however, I did want to attend to this other matter first.
T: Just what was so important that you had to do?
C: I appreciate your interest, but I do not wish to go into it right now. You will have to trust me that I felt it was important enough for me to be late to group. I will try to be on time next week.
T: What if something comes up again next week?
C: Again, I can only repeat to you that the group is important to me, and that I will try to be here on time. However, if something does come up again next week, I will have to make the decision then as to what I feel I should do first.
T: If you make it a habit of coming in late, we will have to consider dropping you from the group. Especially, when you do not tell us why you were late.
C: I can see that you feel coming to group on time is very important, and I have no intention of making this a steady habit. However, just as you must have priorities in life, I do too, and I hope that you will be able to respect and trust my decision for coming in late today even if I do not wish to discuss what that reason involved.

In the above example, we have portrayed the therapist as taking a very rigid role (at least, it is not what one would call "unconditional positive regard"). We may actually play this role in group in order to give the client some practice in dealing with such individuals. The important point here is that the client would be carefully coached as to how to handle a situation such as this without sacrificing self-respect and without saying, "I'm sorry, " when in fact he felt there was a good reason for being late.

We recognize that there is nothing magical in the words "I'm sorry." But they are used too often by individuals when they do not really mean to apologize or when they feel excessive amounts of guilt. As such, we impose the No "I'm Sorry" Rule in order to overcome these situations.

PROTECTION SIX: APOLOGIES

As assertion trainers we believe that some feelings of guilt may be appropriate in some situations. When an individual feels badly for being disrespectful or abusive to another individual and subsequently makes an apology, we believe this is a legitimate action. In this case, the bad feeling (i.e., guilt) experienced by the abusive individual may help him avoid being abusive in the future. The apology, in turn, gives some validation to the other person's feelings and lets this person know that the abusive individual is aware of what happened. An individual who never apologizes or admits ill treatment to another will probably experience some difficulty in forming close interpersonal relationships. Likewise, individuals who are repeatedly hurt by another will tend to avoid ongoing interactions with this abusive person in the future.

We have encountered individuals who make very few apologies. Frequently, these individuals feel that by making an apology they will end up in a "one-down" position where their self-esteem will be damaged or where others will then begin to take unfair advantage of them. On the other end of the continuum are those individuals who, in order to avoid being criticized by others, make an excessive number of apologies even when these apologies are not warranted. With both types of individuals, we attempt to teach the skill of making appropriate apologies without sacrificing one's self-esteem or dignity.

Essentially, in teaching individuals how to apologize, we work on apologizing for the behavior that was abusive to the other person without communicating that the person who is making the apology is generally hurtful or unworthy. In effect, the individual making the apology asserts that his selfworth is not measured by one example of an inappropriate behavior. The skill of apologizing may involve a number of other protective skills such as sorting issues or disarming anger when the recipient of the apology is feeling hurt or angry. In such cases, the individual making the apology must be prepared to stay with the situation until these other feeling are resolved and until the initial message can be heard, as in the following interaction between Nick (N) and Ruth (R).

N: You look upset; is something bothering you?
R: Yes, I am sick and tired of your constant neglect and lack of concern for me.
N: I don't understand what you are talking about.

R: Last night when we went out with Tom and Carol, you spent the whole evening talking about what you do with everyone else in the world. Not once did you mention me or some of the things we do. I am not someone you really care for, but just an appendage to your life that you utilize at your convenience.

N: I did not realize that you felt so left out of everything last night. If I excluded you from most of my conversations, it was certainly unintentional. Looking back on the situation, I agree with you. I was inconsiderate and I apologize (The apology).

R: The fact that you left me out of everything just shows how little I mean to you.

N: Ruth, I said I apologize for leaving you out of the conversations so much last night. However, I do not think that automatically means I do not care for you - the fact is that I care a great deal about you. (Apology and sorting of issues.)

R: You're selfish, you're egotistical, and you don't give a damn about anyone but yourself.

N: I can understand that you are feeling angry and hurt; however, I don't believe all of those accusations are true because of my neglect for you last night.
NOTE that Nick chose here to sort issues again rather than possibly escalate the interaction by responding to the abusive name-calling in a like manner.

R: Maybe we should call it quits. Who needs you anyway?

N: Ruth, I want you to hear that you do mean a great deal to me, and that I do care about your feelings. (Open, honest communication.)

R: If what you say is true, how come you paid so little attention to me last night?

N: As I said, I did not realize I was excluding you so much. I was very interested in what Tom and I were talking about, and I did not realize that you were feeling hurt and left out. In the future, I will try to be more aware of your needs when we go out with someone else. (Restatement of apology and negotiation for future change.)

R: OK, but don't let it happen again.

N: I will try to see that it does not happen again, but at the same time, I would like you to express your feelings at the time, rather than getting angry with the situation and telling me the next day.

R: That sounds fair. I"'ll try to communicate my feelings sooner if you try to include me more often in your conversations with others.

N: Agreed. Now are there some other issues or feeling that we should try to clear up?

R: No, I think that was the issue I was angry about. Let's see how things go for awhile and then talk about the situation again later.

N: Did you hear what I said earlier about how important you are to me?

R: Yes, I heard that, and I think that is what I need to hear more often.

N: I need to hear those things too, so maybe things will work out better the next time.

In ending this interaction, Nick has not only been able to express an apology, sort some issues, and disarm some anger, but he has also been able to express one of his own needs while maintaining his own dignity.

PROTECTION SEVEN: FOG

Of all the defensive techniques, the fog is probably the most controversial. The reason for this is that the fog is a passive-aggressive technique in which the individual takes on an extremely passive role in the interaction. It is not a difficult technique to learn; consequently, it was originally used with hospitalized individuals and with those who were experiencing high levels of anxiety.

The term "fog" was coined as a metaphorical description of the the individual's stance in the interaction. The assertor using the fog appears to agree that the other individual, "may be right" or that he "is probably correct." The assertor does not specifically state that the other person is correct, but only that he may be correct. Likewise, the assertor never agrees that he will change. This technique can be especially effective in interrupting a chronic nag. For example, follow this brief interaction where Richard (R) is nagging Sarah (S) about her driving. Sarah attempts to first give the assertive clear communication, and, when that fails, she begins using the fog.

R: Sarah, you are really driving poorly again. I've asked you a million times not to drive that way.

S: We have been through this before, Richard. You know I don't appreciate it when you are so constantly critical of my driving. After all, you did ask me to take you into Los Angeles today. (Clear and honest communication)

R: But Sarah, I am only telling you these things for your own good. Careful, you are coming much too close to the cars in front of you.

S: Richard, I would like you to stop criticizing. I feel I am driving safely. I have never had an accident or a ticket for reckless driving. (Clear and honest communication)

R: Look at you. You look at me when you talk and take your eyes off the road. You shouldn't have your radio on either because it probably distracts you.

S: You're probably right, Richard, I shouldn't have the radio on. (Begins the fog here)

R: Then you agree, you are a reckless driver!

S: You may be right. (Fog)

R: Don't glance in my direction when you talk to me.

S: (Glancing in his direction) You're probably right, Richard, I shouldn't look your way. (Fog)

R: But you are still doing it. Why are you saying I may be right?

S" Richard, I am not really agreeing with you, I just don't want to be nagged anymore. Let's talk about something else. (Clear and honest communication)

At this point Richard may or may not respond to the last communication given to him by Sarah. Sarah may have to resume the fog, or she may be able to negotiate another solution.

Fog has proven to be an effective tool against unfair, nagging criticism. The behavioral rationale is that if you resist and try to fight back with a nagging person, you are attending to and, thereby, reinforcing the nagging behavior. The fog (a stance of offering no resistance and yet being immovable) is an attempt to remove the reinforcement from the inter-reaction and to cause the behavior to extinguish. At the same time, however, the fog is both a dishonest and passive-aggressive communication system in the sense that the individual is saying something he does not really believe or mean. He also has no intention of changing the behavior in question, even though the recipient of the fog may be lead to believe this. Because of this objection, we have dropped this technique from our assertion training procedures.

PROTECTION EIGHT: CRITICAL INQUIRY

Critical inquiry is a defensive technique which is sometimes effective when an individual is being unjustly criticized, knows this criticism is unjust, and has a strong positive self image. Since the heart of this technique is to ask for more criticism, the individual must be able to hear criticism without becoming phobic or intenalizing these comments. When the individual is not able to avoid internalizing these criticisms, then the technique is not advisable. When criticism begins, the assertor listens attentively and then gives a clear and honest assertive statement that he would like the criticism to cease. If the criticism continues, the assertor simply asks if there is anything else that the individual does not like. The assertor does not defend any specific criticism or counter one criticism with another. His typical reply is "Is there anything else you don't like?"

The behavioral rationale for critical inquiry is one of satiation, whereas selective ignoring and the fog relate more to an extinction paradigm. That is, if the critic finds criticizing reinforcing, then allowing that behavior to continue at a high rate for an extended period of time will, theoretically, tend to satiate and stop the criticism. Like the individual who eats so many candy bars that he cannot bear the sight of another, it is anticipated that the critic will eventually get tired of his own criticisms (besides, the critic is having to do all of the work). During this time, the assertive individual must be prepared to patiently listen to these criticisms without internalizing or trying to defend the negative comments.

As an example of this technique, consider the following interaction where John (J) is commenting on Larry's (L) clothing.

J: Larry, how many times do I have to tell you that you are a slob?

L: John, we have gone through this on a number of occasions. I really like how I look, and others, whom I have asked for an opinion generally agree with my taste in clothes. I have decided I do not want to change, so let's not talk about this now. (Clear and honest communication)
J: You really shouldn't wear a high-neck T-shirt with a sport shirt, Larry. The T-shirt shows through the open collar. You look very unprofessional.
L: I really don't want to talk about this. (Clear and honest communication)
J: I am doing it for your own good.
L: OK, John, you don't like my T-shirt. Is there anything else you don't like about the way I dress? (Critical inquiry)
J: As a matter of fact there is. You have white tennis shoes on with your dark brown suit. Larry, at least wear some dark shoes, preferable ones without holes.
L: You don't like my shoes. Is there anything else? (Critical inquiry)
J: Larry, don't you know that brown pants don't go well with your bright red socks?
L: Is there anything else you don't like (Critical inquiry)

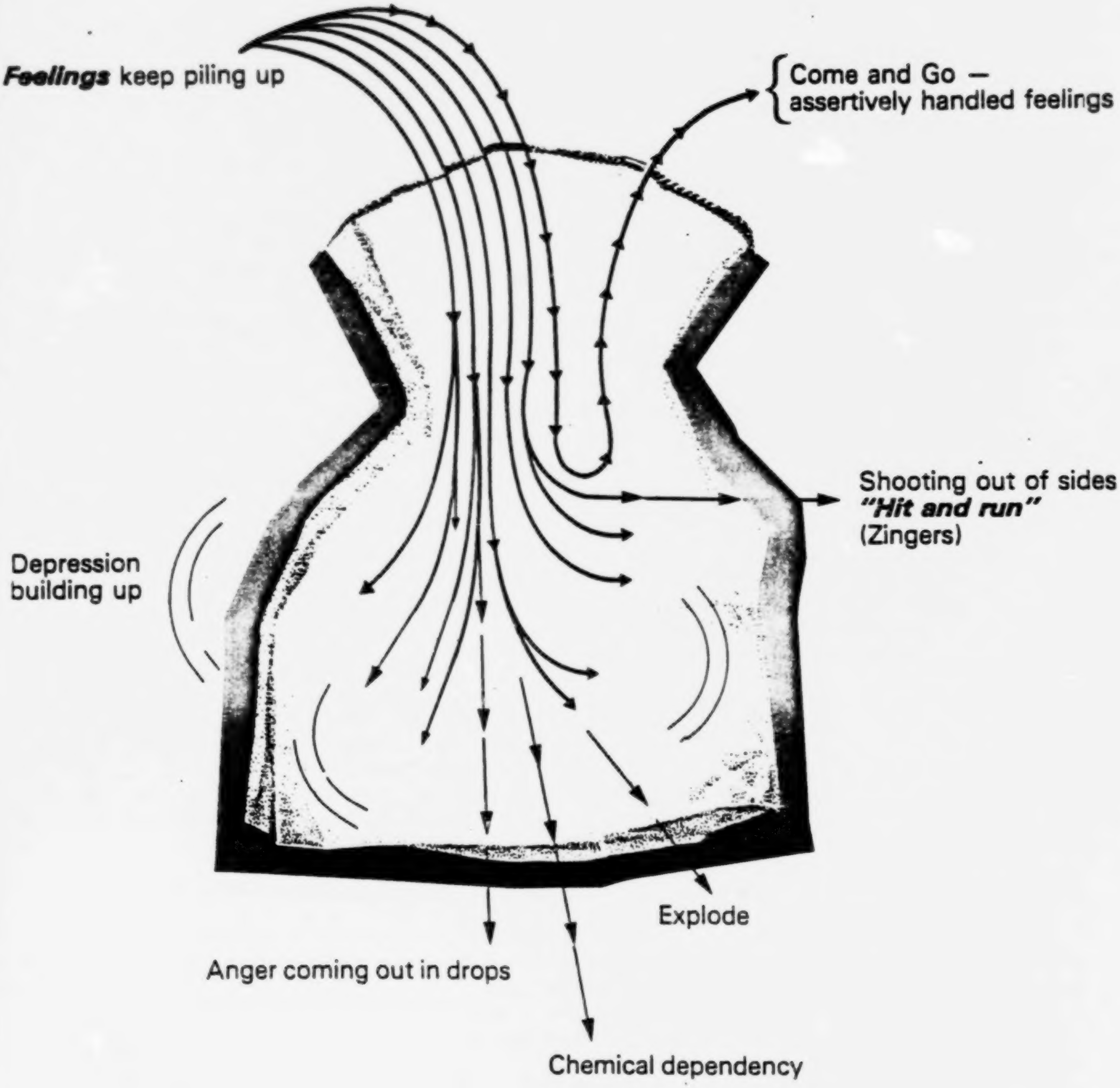
After five more minutes of pointing out to Larry that his camping knife on his rope belt doesn't go too well with his plaid sport jacket and that he is not dressed appropriately to speak at the psychological convention, John would hopefully become tired of listening to "Is there anything else you don't like?"

J: No Larry, I just hope someday you will listen to me.
L: OK, John, if I do decide to re-evaluate my dress, I will come to you for your advice. Until then would you agree not to bring up the subject again? (Attempt to contract)
J: I'll really try. Are you serious that you may come to me for advice?
L: Yes. (Honest communication).
J: That makes me feel better.

Our past experience with this technique is that it can be effective; however, it takes an individual with a very strong positive self-concept to carry it off without feeling abused and angry in the process. In that most of the individuals who seek some assertion training do not feel comfortable in eliciting repeated criticisms from others, negative inquiry has not proven to be as successful as a clear, open message of dissatisfaction or as successful as some of the other previously mentioned protective skills. For that reason, we have dropped the use of critical inquiry for our clients.

We have included the fog and critical inquiry because we did at one time (unwisely) advocate their general use, and because we know of others who are utilizing these procedures and may not be aware of the inherent dangers these two procedures hold for individuals for interpersonal relationships.

Anger Bag


Feelings keep piling up
Come and Go — assertively handled feelings
Shooting out of sides
"Hit and run"
(Zingers)
Depression building up
Explode
Anger coming out in drops
Chemical dependency

Taken from: Your Perfect Right, by Alberti & Emmons

"ANGER IS NOT AGGRESSION"

View of a healthy approach to dealing with anger:

1. Recognize and allow yourself to believe that anger is a natural, healthy, non-evil human feeling. Everyone feels it, we just don't all express it. You needn't fear your anger.

2. Remember that you are responsible for your own feelings. You got angry at what happened; the other person didn't "make" you angry.

3. Remember that anger and aggression are not the same thing. Anger can be expressed assertively.

4. Get to know yourself, so you recognize those events and behaviors which trigger your anger. As some say, "find your own buttons, so you'll know when they're pushed."

5. Learn to relax. If you have developed the skill of relaxing yourself, learn to apply this response when your anger is triggered.

6. Develop assertive methcds for expressing your anger, following the principles: be spontaneous; don't wait and let it build up resentment; state it directly' avoid sarcasm and innuendo; use honest, expressive language; avoid name calling, put-downs, and physical attacks.

7. Keep you life clear. Deal with issues when they arise, when you feel the feelings -- not after hours/days/weeks of "stewing" about it.

8. Go ahead. Get angry. But develop a positive, assertive style for expressing it. You, and those around you, will appreciate it.

Taken from: Your Perfect Right, by Alberti & Emmons

Anger is NOT Aggression!

> If people would dare to speak to one another
> unreservedly, there would be a good deal less
> sorrow in the world a hundred years hence.
> -Samuel Butler

The common confusion of angry feeling with aggressive behavior creates a tremendous barrier to expression of the natural, healthy, universal and useful human emotion we call anger.

Non-assertive people often say, "I never get angry." We don't believe it! Everyone gets angry. Some people have so controlled themselves as to not openly show anger. Typically, such a controlled individual suffers from migraine headaches, asthma, ulcers, or skin problems.

We are convinced, along with psychologist George Bach and many others, that expression of anger is a healthy thing, and that it can be done constructively. Dr. Bach's book The Intimate Enemy deals in detail with constructive expression of anger in an intimate relationship. Persons who develop spontaneous assertiveness can release anger effectively in non-destructive ways, and thus preclude the necessity for aggressive actions.

An important step in non-destructive expression of anger is to accept responsibility for your own feelings. It is you who feel the anger, and that doesn't make the other person "stupid", "an S.O.B.," or the cause of your feeling.

A physical expression of a strong feeling can be a useful means for "venting" hostility. Banging the table, stomping the floor, crying, striking at the air, hitting a pillow can all be good devices for releasing strong feelings without aggression toward another person. However, they are not adequate alone as will be discussed in "The Myth of Instinctive Aggression" later in this chapter.

Preventing the build-up of hostility over time by exercising spontaneous expression when you feel it is the healthiest way we know to deal with anger. Some of the verbal expressions others have found useful include:

"I am very angry"
"I am becoming very mad"
"I strongly disagree with you"
"I get damn mad when you say/do that"
"I am very disturbed/distressed by this whole thing
"It bothers me"
"I am extremely upset"
"Stop bothering me"
"I think that's unfair"
"Don't do that to me"
"You have no right to say/do that"
"I really don't like that"

All too often we have observed persons who express anger, frustration, or disappointment with another by cowardly, indirect, and unnecessarily hurtful methods. Moreover, if the desired goal is to change the behavior of the intended target, these approaches are rarely successful. A "classic" example is the case of the newlyweds, Martha and John. In the first few weeks of their marriage, Martha discovered at least a dozen of John's habits which she found objectionable. Unfortunately for both, she was unable - or unwilling - to find the courage to confront John openly with her concerns. Martha instead chose the "safe" way to express her dislike of John's behavior; she confided in her mother. Worse yet, not content with almost daily telephone conversations with mother about John's shortcomings, she also used family get-togethers as an occasion to berate John before the rest of the family.

This "see-how-bad-he-is" style, relating to a third person (or persons) one's dislikes of another, may have disastrous effects upon a relationship. John feels hurt, embarrassed, and hostile about Martha's attacks upon him. He wishes she had chosen the privacy of their own relationship to tell him of her annoyances. Instead of being motivated to change his habits, he responds to her aggressive approach with bitterness and a resolve to strike back by intensifying the very behaviors she would have him change.

Had Martha chosen courageously to assert herself directly by telling John of her feelings, she would have created a good foundation for a cooperative effort in modifying John's behavior.

Another example will help clarify our attitudes concerning the expression of anger:

Adam took his car to a large repair shop for a several-hour repair job. The maintenance was done on a first-come, first-served basis. He arrived at 8 a.m., but told the manager he would pick the car up around 4:30 p.m. When he arrived, the following verbal interchange took place:

Adam: "Hi, my name is Adam Z., and I'm here to pick up my car."
Manager: (looking through his worksheet) "I'm sorry, sir, we haven't gotten to your car yet."
A: "Damn! That really makes me mad! This is first-come, first-served and I was here at 8 a.m. What happened?"
M: "It was our mistake, we put it in the back and got busy and overlooked it."
A: "Well, hell that doesn't do me any good. It is an inconvenience for me to get my car in and leave it all day."
M: "I know that and I apologize. I promise to get it done first thing in the morning if you want to bring it back."

At this point the customer could decide what his options are and choose accordingly. Adam could try to get the manager to have someone fix his car by working overtime; he could decide to take his car elsewhere; he could return the next day for the repair work; he could demand a loan car.

Notice the anger expressed without being aggressive toward the manager. He was rightfully mad and told the manager so without downgrading him as a person. He might have responded aggressively:

> "You can take that repair job and shove it," and stormed out, or said, "You damn S.O.B.'s never do anything right around here. I demand that you fix my car right now!"

Either of these statements would likely inflame the manager and not accomplish much. The important thing is to express your anger feelings without hurting someone (physically or mentally) in the process.

Honest, spontaneous, "gut-level" assertive expression will help to prevent inappropriate and destructive anger. First, it will often achieve your goals at the outset. Even when assertion doesn't gain what you're after, however, it still prevents the anger you might direct toward yourself if you had done nothing. Despite its advocacy by some popular psychological theorists, the current fad of venting aggression (by hitting other people with foam bats or by shouting obscenities), is not psychologically healthy. Anger may be expressed in assertive ways. By "releasing" angry feelings through aggressive acts (however "benign" they may appear), one simply learns to handle anger aggressively. The following discussion of "The Myth of Instinctive Aggression" will help to clarify our thoughts on this controversy.

THE MYTH OF "INSTINCTIVE AGGRESSION:

"Look at the history of humankind," you say, "wars, violence, inhumanity, street fights, child abuse, senseless killings. I must believe that we are naturally aggressive beings!" And after all, our social systems tend to give a great deal of reinforcement for "aggression" even in its less violent forms: the "aggressive" salesperson; the "high competitive" athlete; the "hard nosed" manager; the "strong willed" politician, all tend to be esteemed.

Popular views of the "aggression-is-natural" viewpoint include those of such heavyweights as psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, ethologist Konrad Lorenz, and psychotherapist George Bach. They offer persuasive arguments:

Freud: "The tendency to aggression is an innate, independent, instinctual disposition in man."

Lorenz: "We find that aggression ... is really an essential part of the life-preserving organization of instincts."

Bach: "The healthy fusion of aggression with developmental process is crucial to the child's eventual mastery of the environment and his struggle for survival in a difficult, competitive culture."

Can we dismiss our disagreement with these views as merely an honest difference of opinion? No. We submit that the most enlightened evidence supports a view of aggression as a potential, but not universal form of behavior. It would be foolish to deny the existence of human aggression, but good cross cultural studies show that it is not a universal form of human expression.

It is worth special mention here, that aggression is not the same thing as anger! Anger is a perfectly natural, healthy human emotion which may be expressed in a number of ways, including aggressively, non-assertively, assertively, or not at all. Anger is a feeling, an emotion we all feel at times. Aggression is a behavioral style of expression.

"ASSERTIVE AGGRESSION"

Although examples of physical aggression proliferate in the news media, its more common cousin, mental aggression, is much more of a problem in most of our lives. Physical aggression itself is seldom pure, because there is most often "a story" behind the violence. Mental aggression is usually the catalyst that trigger the physical outburst. The overt forms of mental aggression can be quite varied and unique, depending upon the inventiveness of the person engaging in the act. A threatening gesture, a firey look, a caustic remark, an inflammed body stance, sly inuendos; the parade of instigations and retaliations goes on.

The question is - re there any forms of non-physical aggression which are justifiable? If an in-law writes you a nasty letter, do you have a right to be aggressive in return? If your boss calls you a foul name because you botched up a job, can you "give it right back?" If you assert yourself with a line jumper and get told to "go to hell!", are you then free to lamb last the offender? If you have been repeatedly assertive about a situation and there are still no changes forthcoming, do you then have a right to be aggressive.

When someone has done something which you feel is aggressive in nature, a first step should be to assertively ask for clarification. In other words, don't assume aggression was intended without checking it out. The next step is to assertively deal with the act of aggression rather than to take flight or to stay and fight. This is a true "turning the other cheek" response. It is a misconception to believe that the best thing to do is to leave the situation, because such an action at this point does not resolve anything. Neither does a fighting-back response. Many people mistakenly feel justified in retaliating against the aggressive person, feeling that someone who can dish out this type of response is not easily hurt, can take it, is hard-shelled. Our clinical experience has been that the person who comes across aggressively, even chronically so, is often as personally insecure as those who behave non-assertively. We feel that it is good to treat them with care as most of us do with the overtly cowering non-assertive type: in an assertive, not aggressive, manner, even if you feel anger.

The third and fourth steps are interchangeable depending upon your feelings. Regular assertive responses allow one to be slow to anger, but if those feelings arise, they should be expressed assertively, not aggressively. Do not be afraid to use assertive anger if you have feelings of anger. One need not become aggressively angry in order for the other person to feel the intensity of one's upset. Along with being able to express anger, do not hesitate to moralize with the individual about his or her behavior toward you. Statements such as "I feel what you are saying is really unfair," and "It seems to me you are being dishonest," may help the individual to settle down. Most will begin to de-escalate when met with an initial assertive return, but if the individual "stays with" the aggression, assertive anger and moralizing may help bring the situation to an adequate resolution.

This leads us to the inevitable question: Is it ever acceptable to be aggressive? What if the individual doesn't respond to any of the steps? What recourse do you have if the individual continually rebuffs your assertive attempts to ameliorate the conflict? The choice boils down to either leaving the encounter or to become aggressive in return. Your choice must necessarily focus on the "cruciality" of the issue at stake. We advocate leaving the situation whenever the issues are not matters of moral or ethical importance, but only "ego" importance. However, if the issue is a morally important one, the answer is "yes," we consider it acceptable to be mentally aggressive at times.

Even if one is forced to be aggressive, it should not be with an attitude of relish, but with an attitude of regret. If you find that there are times you "need" to be aggressive, be careful that you don't find yourself enjoying the chance to "pay the bastard back." In this respect, we might even conclude that there are two types of aggression, aggressive aggression and assertive aggression, which is aggression born of righteous indignation rather than hate.

PUT-DOWNS AND INDIRECT AGGRESSION

One of the most frequent questions we hear from workshop participants is how to handle a put-down. Perhaps the stimulus for this request is the fact that there are a multitude of reasons others find to put us down: for the way we dress, for our cultural background, for our speech, for our mannerisms, for our work performance. There is a large area from which to select to criticize another's behavior. To add to the dilemma, most people also engage in self-put-downs. In this section, we discuss four basic types of put-down behavior: (1) the direct verbal put-down, (2) the indirect verbal put-down, (3) the non-verbal put-down, and (4) the self put-down.

1. The Direct Put-Down: Verbal Aggression: This type of behavior is obvious: another person is verbally blasting you for something. Let us say that you are coming out of an elevator, and accidentally brush someone as you pass by. The person responds immediately in a hostile manner: "Damn it! Why don't you watch where you are going! You fool, you could have hurt me!" The tirade may continue, but the person's intent is quite "up front", isn't it? How should you respond to such a caustic reaction, triggered by an innocent gesture on your part?

We suggest that your first action be to allow the person to vent the angry feelings until he or she slows down. When the outburst has subsided you could say, "I apologize for brushing against you. I didn't do so intentionally. You're obviously upset, but I do not like your calling me names or yelling at me. I can get your point without that." Observe that we did not say that you should retaliate aggressively in return. Research tells us that aggression begets aggression, but we are asking you to "turn the other cheek" by remaining assertive in the face of an aggressive response.

In summary, the four steps we have found valuable when confronted with a direct verbal put-down are: (1) admit it when you are wrong, even in the face of insult, (2) acknowledge the person's feelings, (3) assert yourself about the way he or she is reacting, (4) give a short statement to bring the encounter to an end.

2. Indirect Verbal Put-Downs: What should you say to a boss who states, "you did an excellent job on that project your turned in yesterday. All the grammatic errors gave it a folksy quality." Or what if your spouse says "I love the way you look when you wear that outfit; old clothes become you." Do you do a double-take? Are you confused? What is the real meaning in statement of this kind?

Such indirect verbal put-downs are called indirect aggression. In their book, The Assertive Woman by Stanlee Phelps and Nancy Austin, they speak of indirect aggressive behavior in the following way: "... in order to achieve her goal she may use trickery, seduction, or manipulation."They note further that the reactions this behavior causes in others are confusion, frustration, and feelings of being manipulated. Because indirect aggressive behavior comes out as a concealed attack, Phelps and Austin label the person who behaves in this manner a "mad dog in a lamb's suit."

We suggest that the best way to handle an indirect verbal put-down is to first ask for more information. In either of the situations given above, one might reply with "What are you saying?" or "What do you mean?" Such a response tends to help clarify the other person's true intent. (You may have misunderstood!)

Your second response will depend upon the answer of the other person. Part of your goal in the interaction, however, is to teach the person a new way of behaving toward you. If the boss indicates on the second exchange that, "Oh, I think you did a good job," you might still want to say, "Well, thank you, but I was a little confused. If you are really concerned about my errors in grammar, I hope you can say so directly. I couldn't really tell if you thought the project was good or bad." The message you are trying to teach the boss is that you prefer that he or she be straightforward with you because you are then less confused.

In marriage relationships it is nice to have good-natured teasing, but too often, underlying hostilities come out under the guise of such behavior. Your spouse may have been kidding you all along, but there are more straightforward and less destructive ways to kid or tease people.

3. Non-Verbal Put-Downs: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me: is a taunt children throughout the ages have used to rebuff name-callers. Unfortunately, no reply has yet been invented for our "adversaries" who put us down without words. What is the best way to respond to an obscene gesture or a

dirty look? How should pouting and silly grins or smirks be dealt with when the person uses no words to help you verify his or her intention precisely? The non-verbal put-down is much harder to deal with because the person responding in this manner, first, is not using words and, second, may not always be consciously aware of the put-down. Moreover, you cannot be certain you accurately "read" the non-verbal message.

If another person responds toward you with an obviously aggressive non-verbal put-down, we feel that it is best to attempt to get the person to use words instead of gestures. You might say, in an assertive manner, "Could you translate that look (gesture) into words for me? I have trouble knowing what you're feeling unless you tell me directly." Be prepared for a verbal put-down at this point and respond accordingly, as per the suggestions given above.

The non-assertive non-verbal put-down is the least direct of all. When some aggressively shakes a fist in your face it is usually difficult to misinterpret the meaning. If you are making a request of someone and he or she begins to stare off into space or grin inappropriately, the intent is not so obvious. There is a good chance that the person who responds with an indirect non-verbal put-down is doing so automatically, or out of habit. We all have mannerisms which take the place of words. Although our purpose is not to have people eliminate all on-verbal messages, we feel that it is good to accompany them with words if there is a chance they might be misinterpreted.

Imagine that you are about to pay for a purchase when the cashier looks at you, grimaces, and sighs in an anguished manner. You may wish to "write this off" as nothing personal, or merely assume that cashier is having a bad day. If you are bothered by the incident, however, we feel it is good to deal with the situation. Ask the person to explain further: "I didn't understand your expression." or "I'm not sure what you mean by that." or "Did I do something wrong?" This serves to place the non-verbal response out in the open, to clear the air. If you have done something that bothers the person, you deserve to know. You next response will depend on what transpires, but we feel it is good at some point to explain to the person that it is difficult to interpret, such non-verbal messages.

4. The Self-Put-Down: We feel that people should be advocates for themselves! Too much time is spent verbally and non-verbally (inward thoughts) putting ourselves down. The human machine works best when uncluttered by negative material. We should all be fair judges or critics of our own behavior, but most of us go beyond the call of duty! Many engage in self-put-down behaviors which serve no constructive purpose. We suggest that you start catching yourself when you engage in self-put-down behavior and replace those messages with good, self-confident ones.

CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

There are some useful guidelines for conflict resolution which have emerged out of the work of behavioral scientists working with marriage relationships and with organizational behavior. Most of these principles are parallel to the methods of assertiveness training.

Conflict is more easily resolved when both parties:

1) Avoid a "win-lose" position. The attitude that "I am going to win, and you are going to lose" will more likely result in both losing. By remaining flexible, both can win - at least in part.
2) Gain the same information about the situation. Because perceptions so often differ, its good to make everything explicit!
3) Have goals which are basically compatible. If we both want to preserve the relationship more than to win, we have a better chance!
4) Act honestly and directly toward one another.
5) Accept responsibility for their own feelings ("I am angry!" NOT "You mad me mad!")
6) Are willing to face the problem openly, rather to avoid or hide from it.
7) Agree upon some means of negotiation or exchange. I would agree to give on some points, if you would give on some! (and vice versa).

When conflict involves strong angry feelings, many people fear bringing those feeling into the open. Many of us have been told since early childhood that anger is bad. Recognizing the value of anger, and allowing that natural feeling to be expressed non-destructively, will go a long way toward creating the conditions necessary for constructive conflict resolution.

BURIED ANGER

Others have noted how central anger is to feeling expression and mental health in general. Psychotherapist Andrew Salter observes that "Whenever I'm feeling depressed, it's because I've forgotten to be nasty to somebody!" Our acquaintance with the delightfully spontaneous Mr. Salter (who is responsible for the fundamental concept of assertiveness training) suggest that he uses the word "nasty" for effect; it may also be read "direct", "firm," or "openly angry."

Anger is one of the most difficult emotions for many people to express. Our assertive behavior groups often lose members when "assertive expression of anger" becomes the topic. Many are simply afraid of their anger. Having "buried" it for years, they are terrified of the potential consequences should they suddenly "let it out," It is as if some evil and forbidding monster will escape from its cage.

In our experience, the gradual freeing of anger expression can be frightening for some people. Moreover, they have not learned constructive, assertive approaches to expressing their anger. Finally, they assume that any anger brought into the open will be hurtful to the other person. "I'd sooner suffer in silence than to hurt anyone," is the common, unfortunate, plea.

Taken from: The 1976 Handbook for Group Faciliations

DEALING WITH ANGER

Anger is the first emotion human beings experience and the last one we learn to manage effectively. As early as four months of age, the human infant's vague feelings of distress differentiate into recognizable anger; for many of us, a lifetime is spent in denying, suppressing, displacing, or avoiding this troublesome emotional experience. Because anger usually occurs within an interpersonal context, it is a frequent group phenomenon and presents a management challenge to all concerned.

Anger happens when we perceive an external event (object or person) as threatening or when we experience the frustration of unmet expectations. Although anger seems to be a response to something outside of us, it most often is an intra-personal event: we make ourselves angry. But because anger is so unpleasant and human beings are so adept at projection, we usually attempt to locate the source of our anger outside ourselves with statements such as "You make me angry," "You have irritating habits," "You bother me."

ANGER AND THREAT

When we perceive an external event as threatening to our physical or psychological well-being, a cycle of internal movements is initiated. As the perception is formed, assumptions are made internally about the possible danger of the threat. The assumption is then checked against our perceived power of dealing with the threat. If we conclude that the threat is not very great or that we are powerful enough to confront to successfully, a calm, unflustered response can occur. But if we conclude that the threat is dangerous or that we are powerless to handle it, anger emerges in an effort to destroy or reduce the personal threat and to protect our assumed importancy. The anger cycle can be graphically represented. (See Figure below)

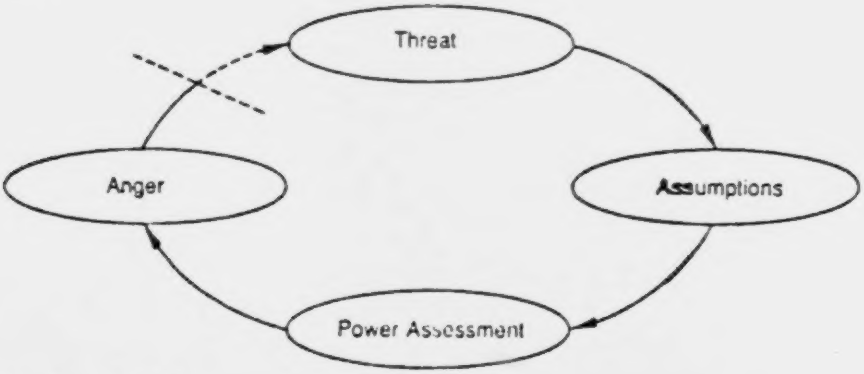


Figure — The Anger Cycle

RESENTMENT AND EXPECTATIONS

In the Gestalt view, anger is resentment, an experience accompanying a demand or expectation that has not been made explicit. Unanswered demands or unmet expectations are frustrating; they become another kind of threat, which trips off the anger cycle within us.

MALADAPTIVE EXPRESSIONS OF ANGER

Unlike most other feelings, anger has no specific body organs for expression. Physiologically, anger is accompanied by an increase in blood pressure and muscle tightness; psychologically, there are impulses to say aggressive words, strike out, commit violence. But the expression of anger can be so terrifying and threatening that, rather than express it outwardly, we sometimes turn it inward, against ourselves. This short-circuiting of the anger cycle produces distortions of another magnitude: anger turned inward is experienced as guilt; guilt produces feeling of depression, incompetence, helplessness, and ultimately, self-destruction.

Another common way to short-circuit the anger cycle is to vent the feeling, not at the perceived threatening event, but at someone or something else that is convenient. We are angry at the traffic jam, but we snap at an innocent spouse. The children consistently refuse to meet our expectations, but we kick the dog. We are angry at the group leader, but we complain about the food. Such displacement of angry feeling serves to ventilate but not to resolve: the anger cycle still lacks closure. When displacement becomes generalized to the system, the government, or the state of Western culture, we begin to see the whole world as hostile and we develop a wrathful attacking behavior style.

Expression of anger can lead to violence; turning it inward produces depression. Displacement is ultimately ineffective and can damage innocent third parties. Repeated failure to close the anger cycle can produce a hostile, cynical, negative view of reality. And even though anger usually occurs in an interpersonal context, it is not an interpersonal event, but self-generated. We make ourselves angry, and there is no one else who can honestly be blamed. Suffering the anger often seems to be the only alternative.

DEALING WITH PERSONAL ANGER

The obvious way to eliminate anger from our lives is to become so personally secure that nothing threatens us. Short of that level of self-actualization, the procedures described here may help.

Owning anger. Acknowledging anger and claiming it as our own behavior is a helpful first step. It increases self-awareness and prevent unwarranted blaming of others. Turning blame and attribution into "I" statements locates the anger where it actually is - inside us. This procedure can help develop a sense of personal power.

Calibrating the response. Anger is not an all-or-nothing experience. It ranges from relatively mild reactions such as "I'm annoyed," "I disagree," "I don't like that," and "I'm bothered," through medium responses such as "I'm annoyed," "I'm pissed off," and "I'm irritated," to intense reactions such as "I'm furious," "I'm enraged," and "I feel like hitting you." Learning to differentiate between levels of anger helps us to assess accurately our capacity for dealing with it.

Diagnosing the threat. What is frightening about the perceived threat? What do I stand to lose? Anger happens because we quickly assume that the situation is dangerous - so quickly that we frequently do not know why the stimulus is threatening. Diagnosing the threat frequently reveals that it is simply a difference in values, opinion, upbringing, or style of behaving.

Sharing the perceived threat is a way to make the internal anger cycle a public or interpersonal event. It diffuses the intensity of feeling and clarifies our perceptions. It permits us to receive feedback and consensual validation.

Forgiveness involves letting go of the anger and cancelling the charges against the other - and ourselves. Forgiving and forgetting cleans the slate and is a way of opening yourself to future transactions. Forgiveness is a magnanimous gesture that increases personal power.

DEALING WITH ANOTHER'S ANGER

In interpersonal situations, we often respond to another person's anger, whether or not we have occasioned it, by threatening or frustrating behavior. It frequently happens that we receive another's anger just because we happen to be there. Laura Huxley, in her aptly titled book You Are Not the Target (1963), views the anger of another as negative energy that is dumped on us, just as ocean waves dump their energy on the beach.

Anger from another has high potential for hooking us into what is essentially someone else's problem. If we view another's anger as threatening, we start the anger cycle in ourselves, and then we have our anger to deal with, as well as the other person's. To be angry simply because someone else is angry makes no sense, but frequently happens anyway. Contagion is a usual by-product of intensity.

Anger from another, if responded to appropriately, can increase interpersonal learning and strengthen a relationship. The following steps may be helpful.

Affirm the other's feelings. An old Jule Feiffer cartoon devotes nine panels to one character building up his anger toward another. Finally, he verbally confronts the other with "I hate you, you son of a bitch!" The other character replies, "Let us begin by defining your terms."

To affirm another's anger is to acknowledge that you are receiving it and to express a willingness to respond. To disallow another's anger usually heightens its intensity.

Acknowledge your own defensiveness. Let the other person know what you are feeling. Acknowledge that your own tenseness may lead to miscommunication and distortion. Develop an awareness of the impact of received anger on your body.

Clarify and diagnose. Give and request specific feedback. Distinguish between wants and needs. Check expectations. Discover together who owns what in the situation. When interpersonal needs and wants are out on the table, the resolution of anger becomes more probable.

Renegotiate the relationship. Plan together how similar situations will be dealt with in the future. Contracting to practice new behavior may help eliminate the sources of friction. Acknowledge regret and exchange apologies if that is warranted. Agree on a third-party mediator to help if the two of you are getting nowhere.

Anger does not disappear if we refuse to deal with it; it continues to grow within us. If we deal with anger directly, the discomfort and unpleasantness are compensated by the new learning and self-strenghthening that occur. If we deal with it indirectly, we easily trap ourselves into polarization, passivity, "gunny-sacking." name-calling, blaming, gaming, and viewing ourselves and our adversary as weak and fragile. Anger is not the worst thing in the world. It is a powerful source of energy, which, if creatively and appropriately expressed, leads to personal growth and improved interpersonal functioning.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

The following activities may be useful in learning to deal with anger.

1. Data can be collected on the methods group members use to deal with anger. Statements beginning with "When I'm angry, I ..." and "I resent ..." can be classified and used to begin a discussion on anger management and conflict resolutions.

2. A structured fantasy is helpful for members to identify their ogres about anger and anger expression.

3. Anger-producing situations can be role played.

4. The group members can express anger non-verbally (sounds, grunts, gestures, etc.) to determine the intent, impact, and after-effects of expressing anger.

John E. Jones
Anthony G Banet, Jr.

HOMEWORK - MODULE 7

- Observe yourself and others in situations where someone else is attempting to redefine your behavior. Notice what kinds of thoughts you have; do you really agree, get angry, get anxious?

  If you did not handle such a situation as well as you would like, write it down and bring it to the group.

- Assume that a person wants to refuse a request to babysit, borrow class notes, or play poker.

  Choose one of thse situations and write an assertive response.

- Create your own example of the non-assertive circle.

- How is aggression related to non-assertion?

- Under what special conditions would "broken record" and "Disarming Anger" be appropriate?

- What is meant by the term "responsible assertive behavior"?

INDEX OF MATERIALS INCLUDED

MODULE # 8

ASSERTION AND SEXUALITY

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AIDS TO ASSERTION

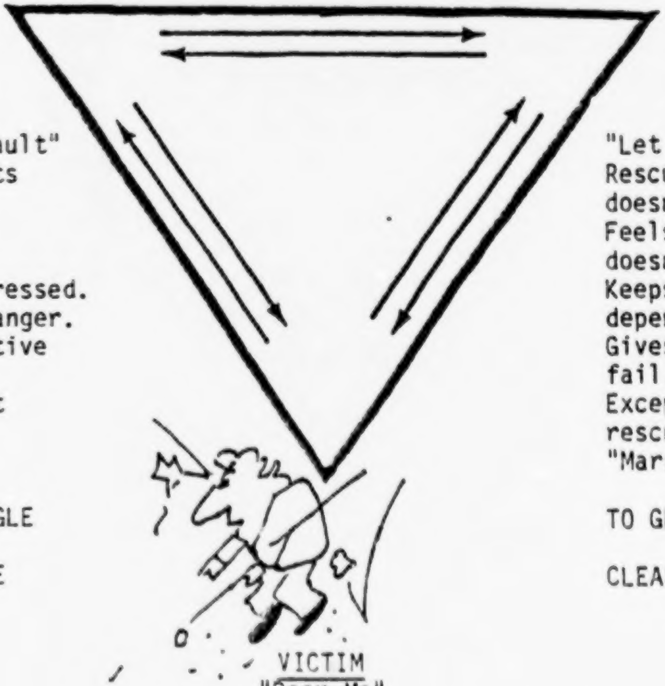
1.	Thought Stopping -	One way to stop thoughts that prevent you from asserting yourself is to think, whisper, say or shout "STOP" to yourself. Consistent practice makes this easier to do. This is particularly helpful with catastrophic self-talk.
2.	Positive Self-Statements	These provide an alternative to catastrophic self-talk that is more productive when you want to assert yourself.
3.	Planning Ahead -	Make sure you have all the information you need for specific situations. Review and practice (in a mirror or with a friend) what you want to say. Be aware of how you sabotage yourself and what sorts of catastrophic self-talk you usually use. By planning ahead you can increase your feelings of self-control and self-confidence.
4.	DESC Scripting -	Describe the other person's behavior specifically, express your feelings (use "I" statements), specify the behavior change you want, give consequences for this.
5.	Active Listening -	Paraphrase what the other person is saying, ask for clarification if necessary. A behavior description is often useful.
6.	Broken Record -	When the other person does not hear what you are saying, be a "broken record" over and over again until they listen to you.
7.	Saying No -	You have the right to say no without feeling guilty. Some useful statements to remember are "I need some time to think that over " and "I am not prepared to .... "
8.	Relaxation to reduce anxiety	Try deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, calming self-statements, or anything else that you find relaxing.
9.	Successive - Approximations	Approach the situation gradually, taking one step at a time. Try each component of assertive behavior separately until you can do it successfully and comfortably. Then put it all together.
10.	Replacing - Irrational Thoughts	Be aware of real possible consequences to a situation, and how you might be distorting those consequences. Replace those irrational thoughts with more realistic ones. Use your feelings of anxiety as a cue to check for irrational thoughts.

"THE DRAMA TRIANGLE"

by Steve Karpman

Purpose: To promote the life script.
The roles of Persecutor, Rescuer and Victim are portrayed in psychological games.
Serves as a training ground for powerlessness.
Prevents psychological equality in relationships.

Will go on as long as someone is willing to be victimized.



PERSECUTOR

"It's All Your Fault"
Sets strict limits unnecessarily.
Blames
Criticizes
Keeps Victim oppressed.
Is mobilized by anger.
Rigid, authoritative stance.
"Critical" Parent

TO GET OFF TRIANGLE
MOVE TO
CLEAR STRUCTURE

RESCUER

"Let Me Help You"
Rescues when really doesn't want to.
Feels guilty if doesn't rescue.
Keeps victim dependant.
Gives permission to fail.
Excepts to fail in rescue attempts.
"Marshmallow" Parent

TO GET OFF TRIANGLE
MOVE TO
CLEAR NURTURING

VICTIM
"Poor Me"

Feels victimized, oppressed, helpless
hopeless, powerless, ashamed.
Looks for a Rescuer that will perpetuate their negative feelings.
If stays in Victim position, will block self from
making decisions, solving problems,
pleasure and self - understanding.
"Dejected" stance.

TO GET OFF TRIANGLE
MOVE TO PROBLEM SOLVING

CYCLES - Based on "disrespect".
When you buy into someone's role, you reinforce them in that position. Instead, give the person "choices" to be assertive. Provide them with respect. TELL - the person what choices he/she has, and ask him/her to exercise his/her Rights.

A SYNONYM FOR ASSERTION IS RESPECT

"COPING" - by Peter Griffiths, M.S.W.

Making a Contract with yourself

A key step in coping successfully with life is realizing that you are the one in charge of your life who has to make decisions about it. Once you take on the responsibility for yourself, and are willing to sign a contract for change you discover that self-improvement on a step-by-step basis is easily attainable if you are willing to keep working at it.

The following is an outline for persons who want to make changes in their lives. It works only if all questions are answered honestly and the person takes the responsibility for carrying out the decisions.

1. What do you want to stop doing?
2. What do you want to start doing instead?
3. What is in it for you if you make the above changes? What good feeling or reactions might result, either from yourself or others? Getting a pay-off for yourself is self-interest, not selfishness.
4. How might you stop yourself from carrying through with this plan. What might you do to sabotage yourself? This is a crucial question. Change is often threatening. You may easily back away from doing what you set out to do. If you are aware of how you might sabotage yourself, you can better prevent it from happening.
5. If you follow through with your plan, how will others react to you and how will they be affected. Does this suggest changing your plan or not?
6. If you see a need to change your plan then do steps 3,4, and 5 again.
7. Up to now, you have been looking at what might happen if you carry out your plan. Next, decide if you are going to proceed with it. In other words, are you willing to sign a contract with yourself.
8. If your answer is no, that's fine. you have made a decision. Are you now prepared to accept that decision and live with its consequences? If not, do you wish to reconsider you decision?
9. If your answer is yes, then how long will your contract with yourself last? Specify exactly how long in hours, days or weeks that your contract for yourself will be in effect. Don't make it any longer than you are honestly prepared to keep it. A series of short contracts is more achievable than a long indefinite one.
10. Now, write down you decision and the exact length of time the contract will be in effect. Write down the date and time when you need to decide if you are going to renew this contract with yourself, or amend it. Remember, a contract can only be amended when it is up for renewal.
11. Sign the contract. You don't need a witness because the contract you are signing is with yourself. Write down the

> exact date, and the words "signed on this day in the presence of myself". Once you have signed it, you possess a legal document with yourself., the very person whose life is being affected by it.

A contract is an agreement between two parties. This agreement is between you and your life. Whether or not you keep the contract you sign with yourself will determine if your life is one of personal growth and achievement. Making and keeping deals with yourself is the best way of coping effectively with life's problems that I know of. Remember, never sign a contract with yourself unless you are prepared to treat it as seriously as you would if the contract were with another person. This way you take your decisions seriously and treat yourself with the integrity and respect that you deserve.

SEX IS NOT A DIRTY WORD -- LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Many people think that when a situation is intimate it is much more difficult to talk honestly and be assertive. In sexual relationships since the emotional stakes are high, your anxiety may also increase. For many of us sexuality is one of the last areas where we can be comfortable with assertiveness, long after we've broken other barriers.

The inhibitions on acknowledging and acting on our sexual feelings are strong. They are often the result of attitudes passed on over a lifetime. These messages may have been given by parents or other adults during our childhood and adolescent years. In many homes girls are told that masturbation is bad; sex is dirty; sex is painful; sex is done to or for you (rather than by or with you); sex is shameful; you should save sex for marriage or men won't respect you; if you enjoy sex you should feel guilty. The paradoxical message is: "Sex is dirty -- save it for the one you love!"

In addition to direct and indirect messages about sex, the strongest message of all may be "Don't discuss sex. It's taboo." Often a dry lecture explaining the facts of menstruation and the "facts of life," duly delivered in a guarded manner, is a parent's only reference to sex in the presence of the child. This itself can convey the message that sex is a forbidden topic of conversation.

If as children we have learned that sex is a taboo subject, how does this affect the way we express our sexual needs as adults? We asked four women with different life styles to meet with us and talk about assertiveness in their own sex lives. Dr. Beverly Hotchner, Executive Director of the Center for Human Concerns, a sexuality resource center in St. Louis, Missouri, joined us too. The women were:

Bev Hotchner, forty-five, married twenty-three years, with two grown sons.
Amanda, twenty-two, unmarried, dating, feminist graduate student.
Lilly, thirty years to a businessman, housewife, mother of two grown children and a teenager, active in community service.

Marie, fifty, married thirty years to a businessman, housewife, mother of two grown children and a teenager, active in community service.
Sandy, twenty six, manager of a bookstore, living with a graduate student.
That is what they said.

Bev: It's important to help women to become aware of what they do to stop themselves from being assertive in sexual relationships. Most women think something else stops them.
Marie: That's not just women, that's people.
Bev: Sure, that applies to both sexes, but tonight we're talking about women.
Amanda: Well, if we do stop ourselves, what makes it so hard for us to be assertive in sex?
Bev: The obvious things stop us. Most women complain of embarrassment: "I could never say that in front of him, never in a million years. I can hardly say it to myself.

Or women feel vulnerable: "If I say that, I'd be open to all kinds of problems - rejection, putdowns, being laughed at. I couldn't stand that treatment. I'm already too nervous about the subject anyway." A classic irrational belief: "I couldn't stand that."

Other women fear that if they said what they want they'd be seen as excessively demanding, promiscuous. They're afraid that they won't get what they want anyway, that men will see them as threatening and be turned off.

Lilly: That all sounds more familiar than I'd like to admit. I can see how I stop myself, especially when sex isn't satisfying and yet I can't tell my partner. I'm afraid that he might think I don't like him well enough, or that I'm insatiable.
Amanda: Or that I'm not doing something right.
Bev: Or that I'm just a nagging wife, and this is one more hassle in a long series.
Lilly: Or I'm just trying to put him down.
Marie: That was my biggest problem. If there was one area in which my husband and I could communicate both verbally and non-verbally, it was sex. For years that got us over some of the other rough spots that we couldn't talk about. It worked that way until we started having sex problems. Then I couldn't tell Bob what I was thinking for fear of hurting him.
Bev: Our conditioning leads men to believe that they are supposed to be the teachers and the authorities about sex. If we dare to express what we want and it's an idea that's new to them, many men feel their virility is being threatened. That's partly why it's so hard for men and women to talk about sex.
Amanda: I know that I've often thought, "If he really loved me he'd know what I want. He shouldn't have to ask - and neither should I." How irrational!

Bev: This view feeds the myth that sex should be natural and spontaneous and beautiful and perfect! We shouldn't have to talk about it or work at it.

Amanda: For me the myth is somewhat different. I never really had any sexual experience until now. Since I'm a feminist and labeled a heavy Women's Libber, I feel that I should know everything about sex, and I'm embarrassed because I don't. My self-consciousness stops me from saying what I want or asking the questions I need to. I just don't take the responsibility for what I'm feeling.

Sandy: Your embarrassment just shows that a lot of the sexual revolution is a myth. The idea that now we're supposed to know everything - and have ten orgasms in a row - is just one more thing for women to live up to.

Amanda: Yes. And I don't like the idea of being taught by a man. But I've got to learn somehow. (Laughter) So I set myself up to depend on what he knows, and I'm afraid he'll think I'm weird if I ask him to do anything he's not doing.

Marie: What would you like him to do?

Amanda: Well, mostly I'd just like to be able to talk more about the whole thing. But during sex I start to get scared, and then I tune out. Then I really get angry at myself for not enjoying it.

Lilly: I know what you mean. During the first ten years of my marriage I didn't even know that sex should be good. I thought that everyone who went on about how great it could be was exaggerating. I didn't realize that either of us should know anything more.

Bev: It's very important to be clear about what you want. Most of the women who come to my sexuality workshops don't know what to ask for. They haven't explored their bodies or given themselves permission to find out what feels good, and so they don't know what they like. Before they can ask for what they want, they may have to discover what pleases them.

Sandy: I think it is hard for women to feel free to explore themselves. Although it's the logical first step, it tends to go against what we've been taught. It's easier to put the responsibility on someone else.

Bev: Easier to let somebody explore her body for her?

Sandy: Sure. We've been taught "hands off".

Bev: Well, that's true, but any women feel more comfortable about exploring their own bodies rather than letting someone else do it.

Lilly: I think I know my own body pretty well, but when I'm with a man it's still very hard for me to say what I want, even though I know what feels good. If I don't like something all I do is tell him that. This frustrates a man, because he wants to know, "Well, what do you want?"

Bev: So you're able to give general negative reactions -- "I don't like that" -- but you don't go on to the positive.

Sandy: Me too. I can immediately react on a gut level and say "No" or "That hurts" or "Stop it" But then either I don't feel the need to be more specific, or I don't want to have to get intellectual and to think any more.

Lilly: I know what you mean about not wanting to get into the mind thing when you're having sex. Sometimes, after the fact, I've tried to think and talk about what I liked and what I didn't when we last made love.

Sandy: How did that work?

Lilly: Well, a little. I told him I was afraid I'd hurt his feelings. He said, "I'll be responsible for myself. It's more unfair to me if you don't say what you want." Maybe I should start by telling him how uncomfortable I am talking about sex.

Bev: That triggers something. We usually think of assertiveness as a verbal skill. But with sex, assertiveness is action as well. It is doing what feels right, whether it's movement or breathing or position or getting the right kinds of stimulation. It's being assertive enough to be satisfied. And it may not be verbal at all.

Marie: Through most of my marriage Bob and I did communicate easily about sex. We did talk a lot about what we needed. We made sounds - "Mmmmm," when something was good. Or movements that said, "Wonderful," Sometimes we'd lie in bed afterward and talk about what was really great for us, or what one of us had liked but not the other. If one of us wanted to try something new we'd stop only if the other might be physically hurt. Some of the explorations were mostly talk: This is what I'd like to do. How do you feel about it? This way we'd be able to find out how the other might react.

Bev: That's very good. You sound very healthy sexually.

Marie: Yes, our sex life was great. But when I went through menopause I got so uptight that some of the things that used to be stimulating didn't work any more. I think that was my problem, because it wasn't that way with my friends. I'd always prided myself on enjoying sex and on being good in bed, but when that started going bad I was really scared. It had been easy to talk when our sex life was good, but when it wasn't I clammed up.

Poor Bob was vulnerable too, and didn't know what was wrong. Here was territory he thought he know very well, but now it was changing. We didn't talk about it, but I was frustrated too. I can remember waking up one sunny day and thinking, "Life just isn't as much fun any more."

Amanda: That's hard. What did you do?

Marie: I said to myself, "If the next thirty years are like this ... my God! What am I going to do?" I know I couldn't live this way any more.

I talked about this in my assertive training group. Then I went home and told Bob I had something serious to talk about. I realized that even though our conversation would be difficult, our silence was hurting each other more. And there was a lot at stake for me.

We set aside a special time to talk when we wouldn't be interrupted, and it was hard in the beginning. Once we really got to discussing what we both wanted, what might work, what we wanted to try ... Well, we talked for hours and that led us to bed and ... Wow! It was really worth it.

That broke the barrier, and since then we're back to normal and sex is great.

Sandy: That sounds terrific.

Bev: Lilly, I'm wondering whether you've run into any new kinds of problems since your divorce.

Lilly: Well, of course there's the old cliche about the divorced woman whom men assume is sex-starved and figure, "She'll go to bed with me because there's no reason not to. It won't hurt anybody." I quickly learned to feel comfortable saying "No" when I didn't want to.

I have a much harder time, though, taking the initiative with men. Suddenly I'm totally responsible for my social and sexual life. If no one is breaking down my door, then sometimes I have to take the lead, and that's not been easy. Sometimes I've suggested to men I've met at parties that it might be fun to see each other again.

Marie: That's great.

Lilly: Yes, but inside I'm very shaky if I think they might say "No." I have to keep reminding myself that I have the right to do this - and that they have the right to turn me down.

Amanda: I've been bothered for a long time because I don't assert myself. Once I decided to try hard to be assertive with my boyfriend. I said, "This is uncomfortable for me to discuss, but sometimes I feel as if you're in control of our whole sexual relationship. We always make love when you feel like it." He's a morning person and I'm a night person. So he falls asleep on me at night and wakes me up in the morning when I want to sleep.

So he listened understandingly, but the next time we made love he was very passive. I wasn't sure why, and I didn't ask. I was scared, but I didn't know what I was supposed to do. I was more concerned with whether I was making love right than with really enjoying it.

When we finished he said, "Well, this time I let you have the control. How did you feel?" I had hated it, but I didn't tell him that.

Bev: Why did you hate it?

Amanda: I don't like being in control, and I wanted to tell him that neither of us needs to control the other.

And I was unhappy because I was afraid to talk about it, even afterwards. I was mad at myself, because I should have said something. Even though we trust each other, he's shy too. I know my reaction was irrational, but both of us are inhibited when it comes to talking about sex.

Bev: Your communication outside the bedroom is pretty good?

Amanda: Yes.

Bev: Usually that transfers pretty well. Not always, but often when communication is poor in general it carries over to the bedroom, where people are even more vulnerable.

Marie: Amanda, in some way this image of being an assertive woman seems to be a real burden to you. You started out by asserting yourself, telling him you didn't like him to be in control. But you didn't follow that up with what you wanted and how you felt. And finally you got angry at yourself for not being assertive.

Amanda: Yes, I think I'm falling into a new set of "shoulds" and "oughts". I'm the one who's making assertiveness a burden by feeling I either have to be totally assertive or else, blah, I'm a failure.

Bev: That leaves you with two kinds of discomfort to deal with. Now you're not just dissatisfied with sex, but also with yourself for not always being assertive about it.

Amanda: O.K. I can see that I trade one rigid set of rules for another. It's a trap, another impossible standard to try to live up to. I do want to be more assertive sexually, but I don't have to berate myself each time I don't measure up to some ideal of assertive perfection.

Sandy: My own experience of not communicating during sex is a lot like Amanda's; I get the feeling that I'm alone in a crowd. Although there's supposed to be this great sharing, it ends up as my personal, lonesome pastime, even though another person happens to be there. So it's a double disappointment. It's my sex, not ours. Perhaps there's physical satisfaction, but that's all.

Bev: Yet at some point it has to be your sex for your own sake or you don't have much pleasure. That doesn't tune out the other person or destroy the beauty of the relationship. You also need to focus on your own sensations in order to experience pleasure.

Sandy: I realize that. But the traditional ideal is perfect communication. If I'm not communicating, then that doesn't fit my ideal.

Bev: But you're non-verbally communicating your enjoyment, and the other person should be picking that up and getting turned on by it.

Sandy: Oh sure, if it's going that way. But Amanda was talking about keeping quiet when you need to talk about something you don't like. Sex can continue through that, but it's lonely.

Lilly: When you need to communicate and you don't, you either put up a barrier or you back off.

Marie: You seem to be saying that every time you have sex you expect perfection. That's not possible. There are varying degrees. Perhaps one of you gets distracted, say by a noise outside, while the other person isn't affected. The partner has the right to be satisfied.

But sex does not have to be a magnificent experience for both people every single time. If you have less rigid expectations, then you can be more relaxed. You don't have to be paranoid and start questioning the whole relationship each time sex is slightly less than perfect.

Lilly: That's true. But afterwards you could say, "That wasn't as good for me as it could have been." Or "I wish this would have happened." Somehow to at least be able to talk about it would be a help.

Amanda: Is it any easier for you to talk about the positive?

Lilly: Yes. I want us to discuss what we enjoyed and why, so we'll know what to do again.

Bev: In my experience it's much more uncomfortable for some people to say what's good than to talk about what's not.

Amanda: Or we give praise in a general way - "Gee, that was neat" - instead of in specifics, especially about sex.

Bev: I like to teach people to say "Yes" as much as possible. There are very few times when you have to say "No." There are alternatives. Like when the guy says, "I'm horny tonight," and she says, "I've had a terrible day and I'm tired. How about taking a shower together tonight instead?" He might or might not go along with that. He could say, "Well, I'd rather not. How about rubbing my back or something?" That way nobody has to be disappointed, and everybody get a little pleasure. It's simple, but it works.

Sandy: That expression "taking responsibility for your own pleasure" sounds so easy when you say it.

Bev: But, it's a foreign concept for most of us.

Amanda: I'm beginning to realize that - and this may sound naive - but sex would be so much better if I did ask for it. It seems so much sexier to know what you want and to ask for it. Making love that way would be wonderful!

Marie: That's different from thinking that you have to know all the answers or always say the right things. Just let yourself go a little.

Amanda: Imagine making love knowing and asking for what you wanted. That would really heighten the experience.

Sandy: Yes. I'm ready to go home and try it.

Lilly: I have to admit that even though I was pleased when you asked me to come here tonight to talk about assertiveness and sex, I was also nervous. Even with a group of women, those old taboos about discussing sex are still there. But I'm glad I came. The discussion has given me a lot to think about.

Social conditioning has taught children of both sexes that sex is a taboo topic. This powerful restriction carries over to adulthood, influencing both sexual communication and behavior, either inhibiting the partners from discussing sex or creating considerable embarrassment if they do try to talk. Moreover, many women, having learned to be passive and to let men take the lead, are extremely reserved in sexual matters. This is as true of feminists who came of age in the 70's as it is of their mothers.

Thus, women may be reticent about making requests of their partner, either negative ("Stop it. That hurts.") or positive ("That was marvelous. Do it again!") or neutral ("How would it be if we tried ...?") And when women do talk, they may be too embarrassed to deal in specifics; only the vague generalities are safe.

Some of the inhibitions to sexual assertiveness are the result of irrational beliefs. Women are often inhibited by the assumption that if they make requests or initiate behavior they'll be rejected, or laughed at. Women also hold the equally mistaken assumption that an assertive woman is less appealing than a passive one.

Taboos, irrational beliefs, and myths also contribute to problems in communication about sex. Although assertiveness may not resolve all our sex problems, it can create a climate for more open communication. It can also help us realize that we can take some responsibility for getting what we want, instead of waiting for our partner to sense our sexual needs. Assertiveness can help us communicate honestly; it can help us risk a new kind of communication rather that suffer - or permit our partner to suffer - in silence.

As Dr. Hotchner has observed, "When a woman becomes assertive and takes charge of her life, she feels more confident. As a result, her feeling about her sexuality are enhanced and her relationships are more pleasurable. Assertiveness in sexuality often transfers to other areas of her life. Then communication in general improves and at the same time sex becomes mutual, rather than male-dominated."

Whenever women decide to become assertive, in sex as well as in other areas of life, it's acting on that decision that ultimately counts.

ASSERTION IN WORK SITUATIONS

Taken from: "Assert Yourself" - Merna Dee Galassi, & John P. Galassi.

This module contains material that is relevant to asserting yourself with business and professional colleagues, co-workers, and subordinates. Obviously, assertion in work situations also involves being able to express yourself to supervisors and bosses.

Assertion in work settings is affected by the fact that personal communication occurs within an organizational setting and therefore often is complicated by organizational structure, policies, and procedures. Personal communication is overlaid with business and professional jargon, bureaucratic red tape, and unwritten codes of behavior. Through unwritten codes of behavior, secretaries learn that it is not acceptable to fraternize or express themselves openly with top executives but that having coffee with middle-management people is permissible. Executives who are on the rise quickly learn that their time is better spent conversing with their superiors rather than their subordinates. In addition, communication often flows through chains of command, by appointment, and by office memoranda rather than from person to person. The result is that much of the communication process is formalized, and barriers are placed even between individuals who occupy similar positions within the organization. Thus, much of the communication between people becomes indirect rather than direct. The problems with indirect communication have been discussed earlier. In summary they include the increased possibility of misinterpretation, the difficulty of determining intent, and the development of a sense of distance between people. In many ways, an organizational structure does little to encourage and much to discourage assertive behavior among its members.

Given the restrictions of the setting and the fact that most people will not be able to significantly alter institutional requirements, assertion will require a more concerted effort on your part than in some other settings. Asserting yourself in this setting may help prevent the development of feeling unappreciated and taken for granted, an experience that is all too common in large organizations.

It is particularly important in work situations to communicate clearly and specifically. For example, if you and a colleague are collaborating on a project, it is important to specify clearly the duties of each person as well as the meeting times that are involved. This specification will help to eliminate the frustration and the institutional buck passing that can occur when clear responsibility for completing a task is not established.

In work settings, positive and negative feedback must be provided if tasks are to be accomplished on a continuous basis. Therefore, it is beneficial to be able to express and respond to both positive and negative feelings. If you work closely with people over a period of time, it is important to compliment them and express appreciation when it is justified. Such expressions build closer working relationships and reduce the likelihood that others will feel taken for granted. Similarly, it is important to be able to receive positive feelings gracefully. Denying or taking exception to a compliment indicates to the person giving the compliment that you consider his/her judgment to be faulty or that he/she is insincere. Such behavior will do little to strengthen the working relationship between the two of you.

Negative feelings often are more difficult to express and to respond to than positive feelings. However, the ability to cope with these feelings is necessary in most work situations. Being able to express negative feeling will build up and undermine the working relationship.

Giving criticism and expressing annoyance assertively involves taking responsibility for and owning the displeasure or criticism; labeling the specific behavior with which you are displeased; clearly indicating what you would like changed the next time; and avoiding name calling, threats, and insults. By expressing displeasure in this manner, you minimize the possibility that your colleague or subordinate will react to your message as a personal attack on his/her competence. Evaluation is an integral part of every job, but it is important to direct the evaluation to the performance and not to the person.

Responding to critical evaluation (criticism) assertively involves reacting to it directly whether it is justified. If it is justified, you can decide whether a change in your behavior is indicated. Close and effective working relationships involves a mutual give and take that is facilitated by assertive behavior. This give and take also includes the skill of self-affirmation. Being able to stand up for your rights often prevents you from being manipulated by bosses, colleagues, or subordinates into taking on more that your fair share of work.

Listed below are some of the common misconceptions and counterproductive beliefs concerning assertion in work situations and internal dialogues for disputing them.

Counterproductive beliefs about right and responsibilities.

I really don't have the right to ask my subordinate to come on time, to leave on time, and to do a competent job since he/she is having such severe personal and family problems. Anyway, two months is not such a long time to be inconvenienced.

Why is this so? Sure, most bosses like to be understanding and give their employees a break when they're having tough times. But, am I giving this person a break, or am I being used? I have the right to expect acceptable performance on the job. I need not feel guilty for expecting it. I've been understanding, but it seems as if this person is playing on my sympathies at this point.

Counterproductive beliefs about how I should behave or appear to others

If I ask for help or information from my co-workers, I'll appear incompetent. If worse comes to worse, I'll do the job over.

Why is this so? I can't be expected to know everything. People ask me for help now and then, don't they? Besides, it seems foolish to consider repeating the task instead of just asking for help. I have a right to ask for help if I need it.

It's easier for me to do my work and my colleague's as well than to ask him/her to do his/her fair share. If word gets around that I'm making demands on him/her, people will think that I can't handle the work.

This belief doesn't help me to avoid significant unpleasantness without denying my rights. I don't like having to do all the work when it is both of our responsibility. I'm being taken advantage of. I can't control what other people think. I have the right to expect that the other person do his/her part. Confronting my colleague may not be easy, but it will help me get my work finished and home on time.

Counterproductive or erroneous beliefs about probable consequences

I don't have to tell my staff that they are doing a good job. They are getting paid for it and will do a good job regardless of what I say.

Is this true? How did I feel when I was in their position? I enjoyed hearing positive comments about my work regardless of whether I was being well paid. A compliment every now and then made me feel better about myself and how I was handling my job. It seems to motivate me. I can see that it is important for me to express appreciation to people if I feel they deserve it.

EXERCISE MODULE

Situation 1 - Expressing Justified Annoyance or Displeasure

You are a supervisor, and one of your employees has been consistently late for work during the past two weeks. You have called the employee into your office to discuss the situation with him/her.

YOU: ______________________________
____

EMPLOYEE: But I couldn't help it. I overslept.

YOU: ______________________________
____

EMPLOYEE: Fifteen or twenty minutes doesn't really make a difference, does it.

YOU: ______________________________
____

EMPLOYEE: I've seen other employees come in late.

YOU: ____

____

EMPLOYEE: Okay, I'll try to do better.

Model Responses for Situation 1.

YOU: Don/Donna. I called you in to talk about the fact that you have been coming late to work these past two weeks.

EMPLOYEE: But I couldn't help it. I overslept.

YOU: I haven't been pleased by your lateness, and I expect you to be on time in the future.

EMPLOYEE: Fifteen or twenty minutes doesn't really make a difference, does it?

YOU: I feel it does.

EMPLOYEE: I 've seen other employees come in late.

YOU: We're talking about your behavior. I want you to be on time from now on.

EMPLOYEE: Okay, I'll try to do better.

REMINDER: Get right to the point. Don't engage in unnecessary formalities. Don't get sidetracked by your employee. You need not discuss the behavior of other employees.

Situation 2 - Refusing a Request

You are up to your ears in work. You cannot take on any new tasks at this point. One of your co-workers is approaching you now to ask for assistance with his/her job.

CO-WORKER: Walt/Wendi, I'm really busy and need someone to cover for me during lunch break. I'm supposed to watch over things then.

YOU: ____

____

CO-WORKER: Please, just this time.

YOU: ______________________________

____

CO-WORKER: You're not that busy.

YOU: ______________________________

____

Reminder: You need not feel guilty. You can't be helpful all the time. At times you have to consider your own needs.

Situation 3 - Expressing Justified Annoyance or Displeasure

Your co-workers always seem to be teasing you about one thing or another - your new outfits, what you're planning to do, and so on. You're tired of being teased. You have decided the next time it occurs to express your annoyance and request that it doesn't occur again.

CO-WORKER: Hey, look at your new shoes. Where do you think you're going? To see the President?

YOU: ______________________________

____

CO-WORKER: Can't you take a little joke?

YOU: ______________________________

____

CO-WORKER: Well, I'll cut it out if it bothers you.

Situation 4 - Giving a Compliment

One of your co-workers has been quite helpful. He/she completed many of the tasks you fell behind on when you were sick. He/she didn't have to do this for you, but you certainly felt relieved to find that your work was up to date when you returned. You want to express you appreciation.

YOU: ______________________________

____

CO-WORKER: It was the least I could do.

YOU: ______________________________

____

CO-WORKER: I know how it can be to miss a week at work. I'm glad I could be of help.

YOU: ____

____

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Throughout this course, I have provided a number of procedures, suggestions, and exercises to help you assess and modify both attitudes and behaviors that are relevant to self-assertion. Those of you who have systematically completed your assertion training program at this point undoubtedly have made important and significant changes in the way you think about and relate to other people. Those of you who are about to begin your programs can look forward to such changes following a good bit of hard work. Assertion training is not a panacea. It does not guarantee that people automatically will flock to you, that your personality will change radically, or that all your problems will suddenly disappear. However, it can provide you with a new and important set of communication skills and another way to view yourself and your relationships with other people.

As we have mentioned before, assertion training is not a method for getting what you want from your environment regardless of the cost to others. Rather, it is a way of making your needs, opinions, rights, and feelings known in an appropriate manner so that there will be little misunderstanding about where you stand and how you feel. We believe that people generally feel better about themselves and greater self-respect if they are able to directly communicate how they feel about an issue than if they feel too inhibited to speak or if they can only communicate in indirect ways by having to qualify or apologize for everything they say. As we have said before, indirect or implied communication is annoying to have to decipher, often forces the listener to be a mind reader, and is subject to misinterpretation. If you communicate clearly and directly, it is not likely that you will be misunderstood. We believe that such communication increases the probability that your opinions will be respected and that your interactions with others will work out favorably both from your perspective and that of the other person.

Assertion does not occur in a vacuum. It has consequences for you and for others in your environment. By this time, we trust that you have developed the ability to make responsible judgments about how you will behave in a situation based on an evaluation of your needs, rights, and responsibilities; and the expected short-and long-term consequences of the possible courses of action open to you in the situation.

Remember that in any situation you choose how you will behave. This course has provided you with the procedures for developing the ability to assert yourself. However, the final decision to behave assertively or not in a given situation is always up to you.

Good luck with your future assertions. You have the right to express your feelings, preferences, needs, and opinions without excessive anxiety or guilt and the responsibility to express these in a way that does not threaten, insult, or hurt other people.